



*New England School Development Council*

28 Lord Road, Marlborough, MA 01752 ➤ Tel: 508-481-9444 ➤ [www.nesdec.org](http://www.nesdec.org)

## **Suffield School District Superintendent Search**

### Successful Candidate Profile and Community Needs Assessment Report

February 25, 2019

This document reports the results of the community outreach portion of the Superintendent search process and provides the Successful Candidate Profile to inform the candidate selection process



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**To:** Suffield Board of Education

**From:** Elizabeth M. Osga, Ph.D.  
New England School Development Council (NESDEC)

**Date:** February 25, 2019

This report contains the following two sections:

**Section 1:** presents the *Successful Candidate Profile*.

**Section 2:** provides the results of the community outreach from which the profile was developed.

# **SECTION 1**

## **SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE PROFILE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

On February 14, Dr. Elizabeth Osga, a consultant from New England School Development Council (NESDEC) facilitated focus group meetings, representing parents, community members, administrators, faculty and staff and conducted multiple individual interviews of key stakeholders. In addition, an online survey containing the same questions was made available. Over 400 individuals participated in the process. The information gathered through this outreach process was used as the basis to detail the qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience desired in a new Superintendent of Schools and to identify the pressing challenges ahead of him or her.

The Suffield Board of Education subsequently reviewed and analyzed all of the input collected. This information was used to develop the Successful Candidate Profile. The Successful Candidate Profile will be used to guide the interview and selection process for the search for our new Superintendent.

The Suffield Board of Education wishes to thank all those in the community and schools who took the time to participate in the community needs assessment process. The Board looks forward to using the valuable insights gained through the needs assessment as candidates are considered for the position of Superintendent of Schools.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Suffield Board of Education

## **SUFFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE PROFILE**

The Suffield Board of Education seeks candidates who are experienced and successful educational leaders of highest character and who demonstrate competence in all aspects of the job of Superintendent of Schools. To ensure the selected candidate has the necessary attributes to succeed, the Board of Education conducted a Community Needs Assessment. Participants were asked to provide their thoughts on the qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience desired in a new Superintendent of Schools, and the pressing tasks and challenges ahead of him or her. The Board used the valuable information gathered through this process to inform its discussions in creating the following Suffield School District Successful Candidate Profile.

### ***The Suffield Board of Education Seeks a Superintendent***

#### ***Who:***

1. Has a high probability of success in the position and has high intentionality of remaining in the position for a significant term of service.

The Suffield school community has expressed a strong call for a capable superintendent who will commit to the district so that it can thrive and grow under consistent and continuous leadership. In the quest for a superintendent who is likely to succeed, participants in the needs assessment suggested that the candidate of choice be someone with highly relevant experience and proven success in multiple leadership positions.

2. Is an outstanding collaborator and communicator and has an impactful presence in the schools and community.

The ideal candidate for the Suffield superintendent position is a genuine “people person” with an array of personal qualities that support that role. Among the most important of these qualities are collaboration and communication. The new superintendent should be able to communicate successfully with students, parents, teachers, administrators, the Board of Education, town leaders, and community members. The superintendent must also be a skilled collaborator who can work with varying perspectives and parties. Constituents want the superintendent to be visible and engaged in the schools and community.

3. Can bridge understandings and unify the district and community.

While the district and community have endured a period of stress, there is a strong desire to change relationships that divide them. The new superintendent is viewed as an agent of this change, who will bring parties together. While agreement on issues such as school spending may not be fully achieved, understanding and respect for perspective differences are realistic expectations. The Board and town leaders all appreciate the value of strong relationships. The town of Suffield and the Suffield Public Schools will both be best served in partnership rather than as separate or competing entities.

4. Has and can inspire creative vision for high-quality 21<sup>st</sup> Century education.

Many participants in the needs assessment have requested that the new superintendent have strong and creative vision. They want the superintendent to have the knowledge of technology and twenty-first century skills and be able to inspire and lead the development of programs that offer students many opportunities for success in the world they will live in. At the same time, the Suffield community is aware of the challenge of doing more with less.

## **Pressing Tasks and Challenges for Our New Superintendent**

While it is a given that the new superintendent will create an entry plan that acquaints him/her with people, processes, policies, politics and programs, the community outreach input provides a focus on very specific tasks and challenges for the new superintendent. Discussion of these tasks and challenges follows.

1. Lead the District in restoring its image and reputation as a high quality school district.

Suffield has experienced a difficult period in recent years. High turnover in superintendents and other administration has created unflattering headlines and shaken the confidence of parents and community members, while taxing the morale of the staff. There is a strong desire to change the narrative of this recent history. Stakeholders want their District to rank favorably among Connecticut's high-quality public school systems. They believe that this can happen.

2. Build positive relationships with and among the stakeholders in the Suffield District and community.

The Suffield community is ready for a superintendent who will not only build good relationships with groups and individuals, but one who will also foster positive relationships among groups and individuals. Quality relationships will require excellent communication skills and habits such as active listening, trust building, transparency and ongoing outreach. The superintendent's relationships should be strong enough to withstand challenges and enable the superintendent to hold the line on policies and principles that are in the best interest of students, the schools and the district and to help those with issues use the appropriate procedures for resolving them. The new superintendent will be well served in the mission of relationship building to be highly visible and to know and be known by students, staff, parents and community members.

3. Engage stakeholders in the development of a shared vision and a reasonable plan for achieving it.

Quality relationships will enable the new superintendent to engage stakeholders in the development of shared vision and a reasonable plan for achieving it. Although stakeholders want a "visionary superintendent", they want one wise enough to know

that the vision of the district should emerge from the collective voices and input from members of the school community. While insight and experiences of the new superintendent may be useful, the district would not be well-served by an imposition of projects and priorities from the superintendent's past. The superintendent should observe and learn about the successes embedded in Suffield and guide the District in the creation of a unified vision and well-orchestrated plans for achieving related goals over time.

4. Place educational programming at the center of the District's priorities.

The educational community has issued a call for focusing on the improvement of several areas of the educational program. These include special education, programming for high-ability students, ensuring that social and emotional needs are met, and the improvement of curriculum and instruction. High expectations for teaching and learning need to be embedded in all educational programming. Both trust in teachers and accountability should be represented in the design, development and implementation of educational programs.

5. Ensure that the talent management system is designed and functions to attract and retain high-quality administrators, faculty and staff.

In addition to the high turnover of superintendents, Suffield has experienced high rates of administrator and teacher mobility. Such has challenged continuity, consistency and program improvement efforts. Many talented educators have left the district.

At the same time, many survey and focus group participants noted that stronger talent development and accountability systems are needed. There is wide recognition of the importance of a stable and well-developed staff. The district will benefit from strong talent management.

## **SECTION 2**

### **SUFFIELD SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH**

#### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Community input to inform the Superintendent search process was sought through focus groups and an online questionnaire open to community members and stakeholders. Respondents focused on the future of the Suffield Public Schools. All participants are to be commended for giving their time to this important task.

Participants were asked to respond to two prompts:

1. I think the new Superintendent should possess the following qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience.
2. The following are the immediate challenges and tasks the new Superintendent should focus upon in his or her first six to twelve months in the position.

# FOCUS GROUPS

## FACULTY/STAFF/ADMINISTRATORS

**PROMPT 1: I think the new Superintendent should possess the following qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience:**

### QUALITIES/CHARACTERISTICS

- Ethical
- Transparent
- Approachable
- Child centered (above all other stakeholders)
- Sincere
- Authentic
- Trusting
- Strong, can hold ground
- Firm
- Have a backbone
- Thoughtful and calm in regards to decision making
- Doesn't shoot from hip
- Willing to compromise
- Focused
- Takes time to know people and situations
- Empathetic
- Calm under pressure
- Intentional
- Cheerleader for school community
- Is stable and consistent
- Supportive
- Equitable
- Is visible
- Fair
- Honest
- Credible
- Passionate
- Unifier (vs. silo operations)
- Thick skin

### KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS

- Knowledgeable on how to work with boards of education
- Can create consistency and stability in the position
- Can unify people
- Good liaison between board and administrators
- Good decision maker



- Can remedy climate issues
- Public relations
- Effective communicator
- Educational vision
- Collaborator
- Communication
- Sees town as asset not a problem
- Good at public relations
- Good communicator
- Skilled at working with people who need to be told “no”
- Needs to promote leadership team of Board and Superintendent
- Good relational skills
- Good decision maker
- Can address climate issues
- Can unite people
- Is able to bring many different parties together
- Good leadership skills
- Collaborator and communicator
- Can deal with the politics
- Can compromise
- Needs to know how Suffield works
- Can talk with ease to parents, teachers, and Board of Ed
- Doesn't change what doesn't need to be changed
- Has the people skills necessary to work with the community
- People skills
- Good relational skills
- Can bring together many different perspectives
- Can redirect people complainants to correct protocols when necessary
- Can manage projects
- Visionary
- Can create understanding and openness

## **EXPERIENCE**

- Building leadership (any level)
- Building level experience at all levels (administrative or other)
- Instructional experience
- Classroom teaching experience
- Political communication
- Central office
- Superintendent or seasoned central office administrator who understands the big picture
- Building based experience
- Helpful to have central office experience
- Some administrative experience

**PROMPT 2: What are the immediate challenges and tasks the new Superintendent should focus upon in the first six to twelve months in the position?**

- Deal with the public at large
- Repair community perception
- Promote child centered vision and goals
- Chain of command—establish
- Have common ground with all stakeholders in the community
- Establish organizational protocols—management routines, procedures
- Balance urgency with thoughtfulness
- Curriculum and instruction
- Address special education program quality
- Create and maintain a good relationship with the BOE
- Set up relationships with community
- Unite people
- Address special education program
- Create and insist on appropriate channels for complaint appeal
- Build relationships with town officials, administrators, teachers, etc.
- Get to know district improvement plans and the initiatives underway
- Get into the buildings and see instruction—be visible and engaged
- Be visible
- Observe what is working and where change should be done
- Get the Board behind you
- Make the Board and the Superintendent a unit

## **TOWN LEADERS**

**PROMPT 1: I think the new Superintendent should possess the following qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience:**

### **QUALITIES/CHARACTERISTICS**

- Collaborative
- Is involved in the schools
- Less controlling
- Relational rather than authoritative style
- Transparency
- Willingness to work with town
- Willingness to explore shared services with the town (IT, maintenance, etc.)
- Openness to collaboration with the town (police, youth services etc.)
- Trust
- Be fiscally savvy
- Is direct and humble in communications

### **KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS**

- Good listener
- Is concise in messaging
- Is able to diffuse tensions
- Understands that Suffield is a small community and that change is hard
- Understands the contrast in Suffield with farms that have been here for generations as well as waves of new professionals who make their homes here
- Takes a proactive stance in planning for future collaborations with other school districts as opposed to having decisions made by others
- Will dialogue about budget movement and changes (transfers)
- Has creative ideas around shared services/regionalization
- Gets "ahead of the future"
- Keep increases in budget reasonable
- Wants to talk through budget, understand what the drivers are, not be defensive
- Partners on unforeseen factors with finance
- Communicates well
- Has vision
- Is an innovator

### **EXPERIENCE**

- In-state experience would be helpful
- Financial acumen in background
- Seasoned veteran
- Success with special education

**PROMPT 2: What are the immediate challenges and tasks the new Superintendent should focus upon in the first six to twelve months in the position?**

- Rebuilding relationship with town government
- Facilitate open sharing of information with town partners
- Address staff morale
- Keep the best staff and address the staff who may not be a great fit
- Special education—getting a handle on the program
- Establish trust
- Convince people that superintendent is here for the long haul
- Address the special education problems
- Address curriculum needs, in particular, experiences for top performing students
- Ensure that the police are more involved in schools-community policing

## **PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**

**PROMPT 1: I think the new Superintendent should possess the following qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience:**

### **QUALITIES/CHARACTERISTICS**

- Strong moral compass
- Brings consistency to role
- Transparency
- Open
- Humble
- Prefer someone who doesn't live in town
- Trustworthy
- Innovative
- Has vision
- Is creative

### **KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS**

- Can successfully engage with families and the community
- Can hold people accountable
- Has a sense of community
- Can "coach up or coach out" staff who are underperforming
- Doctorate preferred
- Has good knowledge of finances
- Is fiscally responsible
- Can "figure out" how to make budget work-do more with less
- 

### **EXPERIENCE**

- Very experienced
- Was a successful superintendent
- Was a teacher

**PROMPT 2: What are the immediate challenges and tasks the new Superintendent should focus upon in the first six to twelve months in the position?**

- Build trust with faculty and staff
- Work on delayed start time (secondary level)
- Engage with faculty and community
- Assess the current status of programs and operations
- Consider opportunities for parents to volunteer at high school level
- Address special education issues
- Create parent engagement opportunities

# **ONLINE SURVEY**

## Superintendent Qualities/Skills/Attributes Inventory

The Suffield Board of Education invites you to provide input regarding the characteristics believed to be important in the next Superintendent of Schools. Below are listed some of the qualities, skills and attributes research indicates are necessary to be an effective Superintendent. By checking the boxes next to your choices, please select the five (5) that you think are most important. You are also invited to comment on your five choices. All responses will be considered anonymous. Your responses would be greatly appreciated by **Friday, February 1, 2019 at noon**.

Thank you for your participation in this questionnaire.

\* 1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district.

I would like a leader who...

- a.--uses a systematic approach to managing and improving the schools; has excellent organizational skills, working knowledge of school law and proven ability to resolve organizational conflicts.
- b.--has the ability and insight to recruit and retain high quality staff; has strong personnel management practices and understanding of collective bargaining process.
- c.--demonstrates support and has an appreciation for the role of extra-curricular (co-curricular) activities in the educational experiences of students.
- d.--demonstrates a strong commitment to leading the effort to define and deliver an effective, consistent 21st Century education program for students of all backgrounds and ability levels.
- e.--will be visible in schools, aware of current issues and activities in the schools and shows an interest in community affairs.
- f.--possesses excellent people skills; demonstrates the ability to involve the community in developing and implementing goals; views the community/school relationship as a partnership.
- g.--is able to motivate, lead, guide and direct people; is committed to implementing the mission statement and vision statement of the school system.
- h.--has a good understanding of facilities management, including development of long-term maintenance plans, and budgeting/planning for future building needs.
- i.--has an appreciation for the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of students and has an understanding of the development and implementation of support and intervention strategies to meet those needs.
- j.--is able to communicate clearly both verbally and in writing.
- k.--has a strong working knowledge of school finance, including budget development and management; has the ability to effectively communicate regarding budgetary issues with the Board of Education, staff, community and local municipal officials; has clear understanding of federal, state, and local funding issues.
- l.--has the commitment to supervise and evaluate school programs in the spirit of continuous improvement; has an understanding of educational practices, research and national/state/local initiatives; has the ability to frame issues for discussion, reach timely decisions and implement change.
- m.--is committed to and fosters continuous staff development and emphasizes system-wide as well as individual development.
- n.--understands that the Superintendent is responsible for management of the schools in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and also in compliance with the Board of Education's policies.
- o.--has an understanding of technology as it applies to teaching and learning.
- p.--understands the importance of accountability for staff and self; understands how to design and implement an evaluation process that establishes clear performance standards and follows through to resolve performance issues.

2. In the space provided below, you are invited to provide your reasons and/or additional commentary regarding the five qualities/skills/experiences you chose as the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district.



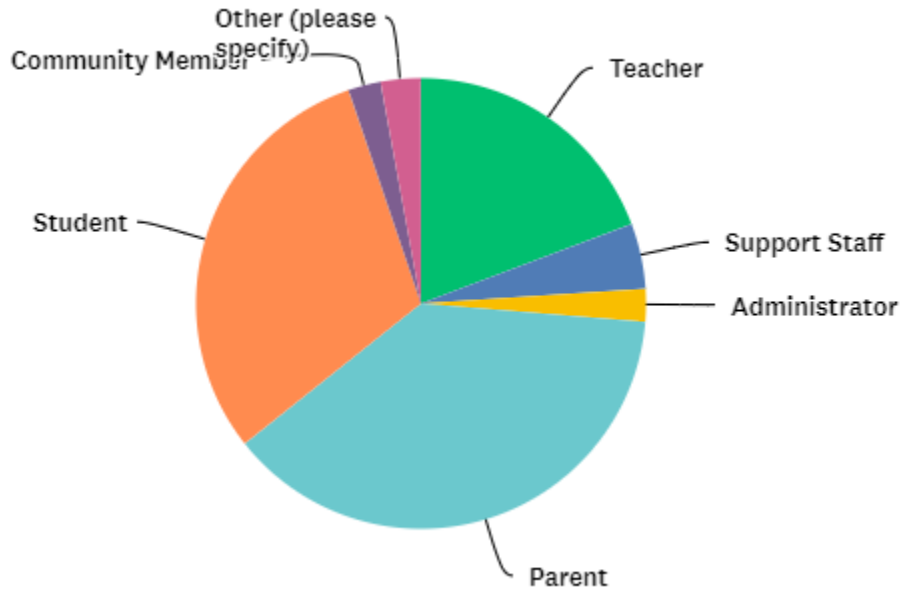
3. In the space below, please indicate the challenges and tasks you think are important for the new Superintendent to focus upon in her/his first six to twelve months in the position.

4. In the space below, you are invited to provide additional comments or information that you think would be helpful to the Board of Education as it seeks to find a new Superintendent of Schools.

5. Which ONE of the following best describes your role in the school system?

- Teacher
- Support Staff
- Administrator
- Parent
- Student
- Community Member
- Other (please specify)

**Which ONE of the following best describes your role in the school system?**



<b>Teacher</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Support Staff</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Administrator</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Parent</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Student</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Community Member</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Skipped</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>387</b>

### **QUESTION 1:**

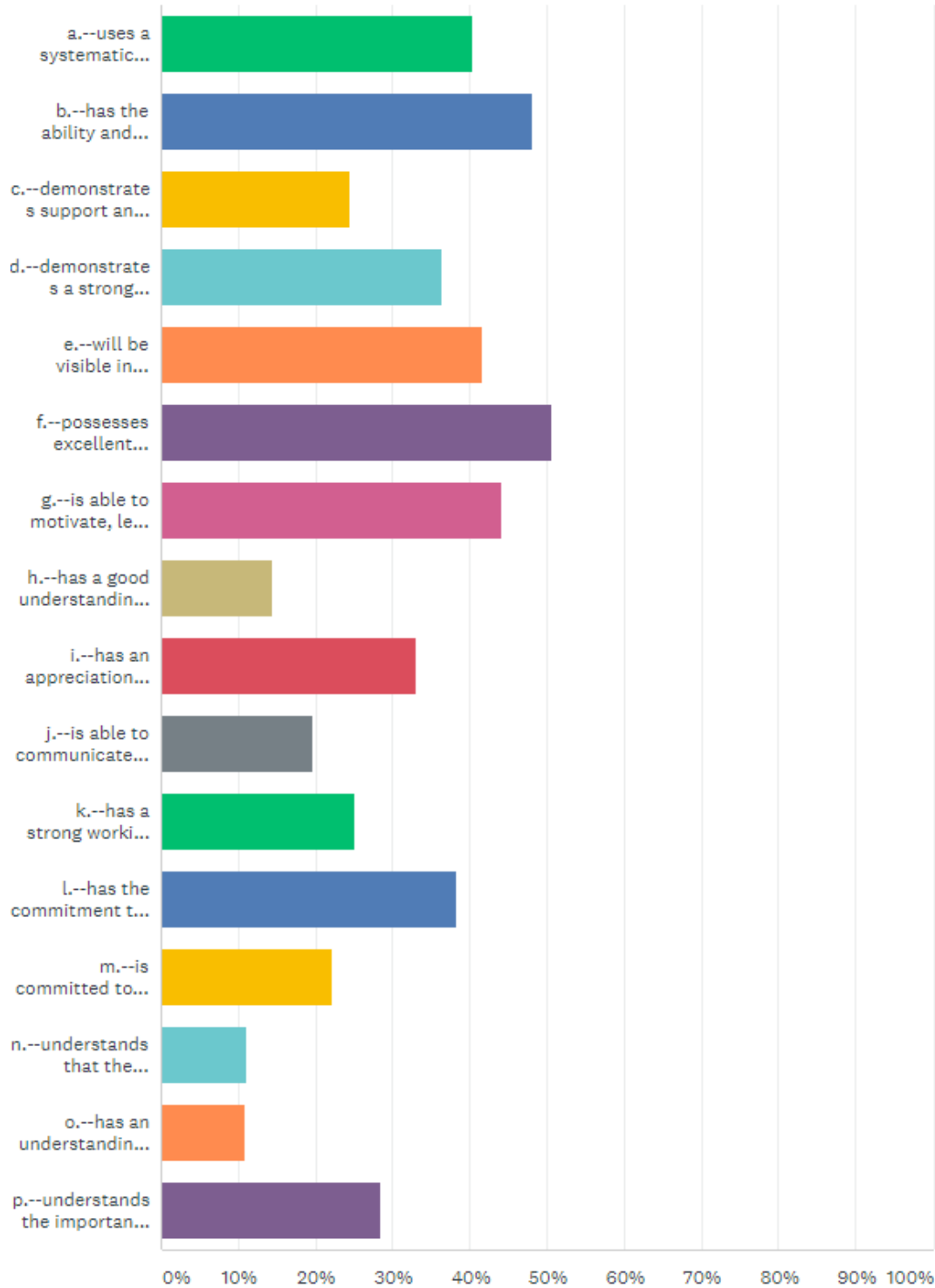
**Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...**

- a.** uses a systematic approach to managing and improving the schools; has excellent organizational skills, working knowledge of school law and proven ability to resolve organizational conflicts.
- b.** has the ability and insight to recruit and retain high quality staff; has strong personnel management practices and understanding of collective bargaining process.
- c.** demonstrates support and has an appreciation for the role of extra-curricular (co-curricular) activities in the educational experiences of students.
- d.** demonstrates a strong commitment to leading the effort to define and deliver an effective, consistent 21st Century education program for students of all backgrounds and ability levels.
- e.** will be visible in schools, aware of current issues and activities in the schools and shows an interest in community affairs.
- f.** possesses excellent people skills; demonstrates the ability to involve the community in developing and implementing goals; views the community/school relationship as a partnership.
- g.** is able to motivate, lead, guide and direct people; is committed to implementing the mission statement and vision statement of the school system.
- h.** has a good understanding of facilities management, including development of long-term maintenance plans, and budgeting/planning for future building needs.
- i.** has an appreciation for the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of students and has an understanding of the development and implementation of support and intervention strategies to meet those needs.
- j.** is able to communicate clearly both verbally and in writing.
- k.** has a strong working knowledge of school finance, including budget development and management; has the ability to effectively communicate regarding budgetary issues with the Board of Education, staff, community and local municipal officials; has clear understanding of federal, state, and local funding issues.
- l.** has the commitment to supervise and evaluate school programs in the spirit of continuous improvement; has an understanding of educational practices, research and national/state/local initiatives; has the ability to frame issues for discussion, reach timely decisions and implement change.
- m.** is committed to and fosters continuous staff development and emphasizes system-wide as well as individual development.
- n.** understands that the Superintendent is responsible for management of the schools in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and also in compliance with the Board of Education's policies.
- o.** has an understanding of technology as it applies to teaching and learning.
- p.** understands the importance of accountability for staff and self; understands how to design and implement an evaluation process that establishes clear performance standards and follows through to resolve performance issues.

**ALL RESPONDENTS**

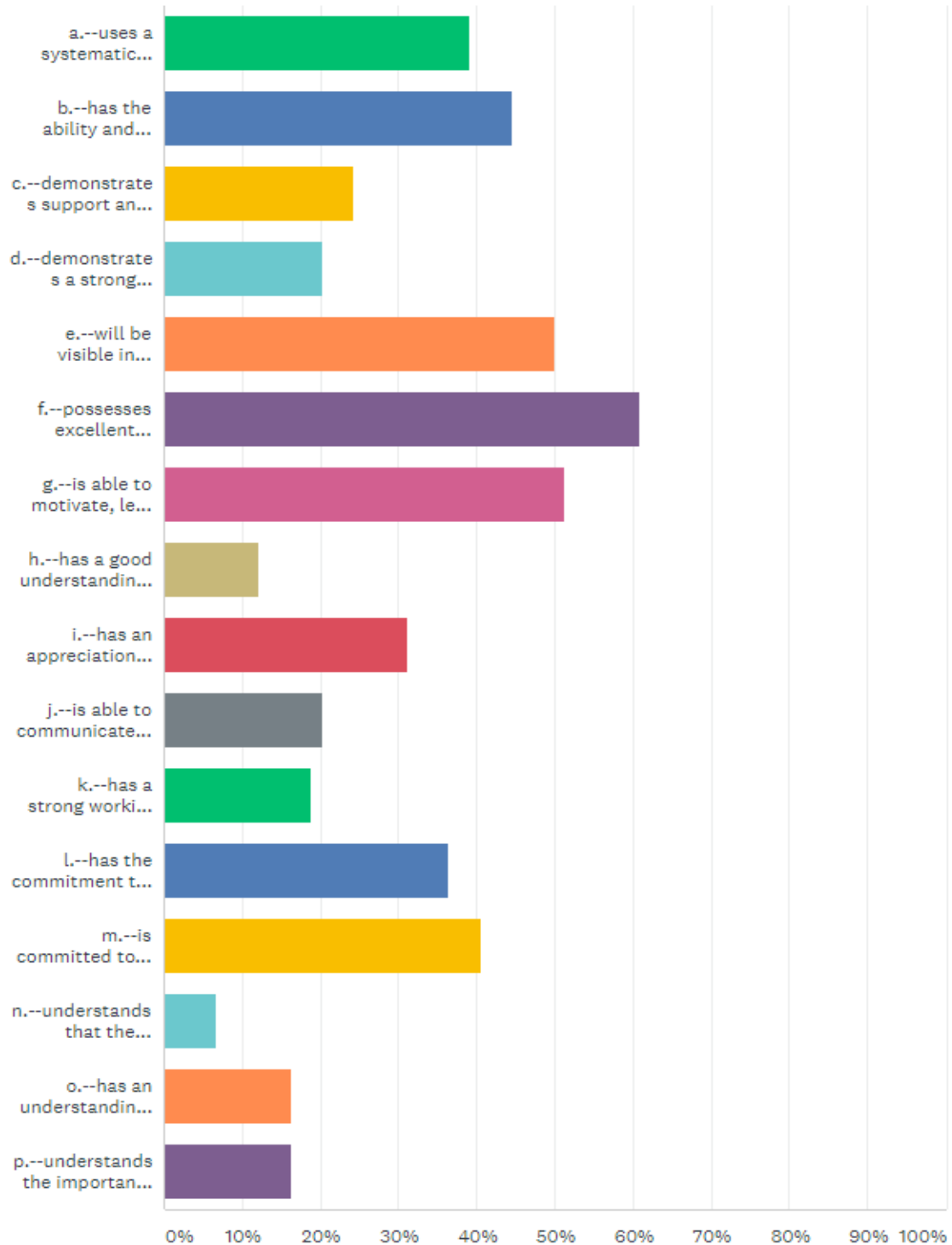
**N=387**

Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...



**TEACHERS**  
**N=74**

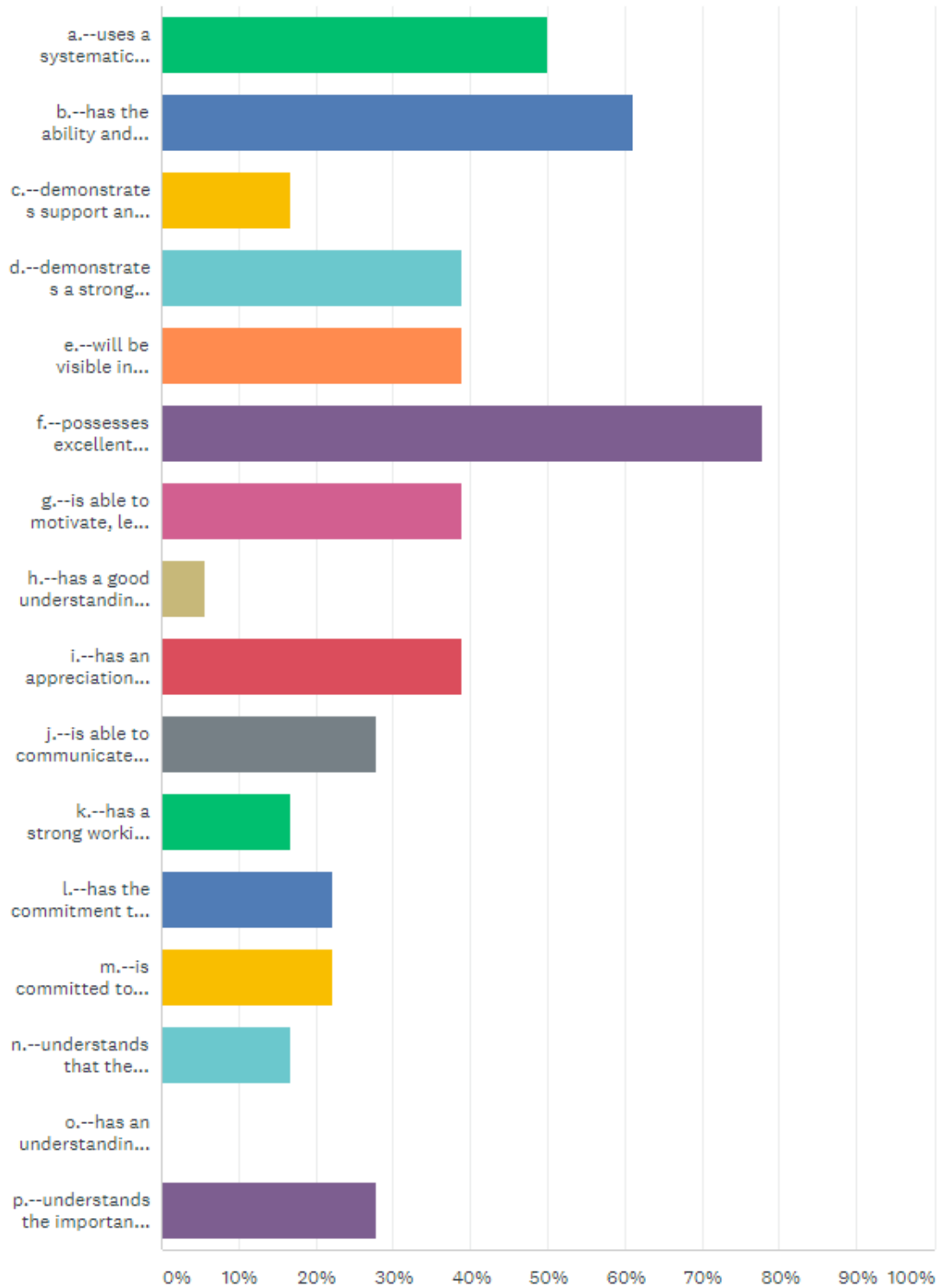
Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...



## SUPPORT STAFF

N=18

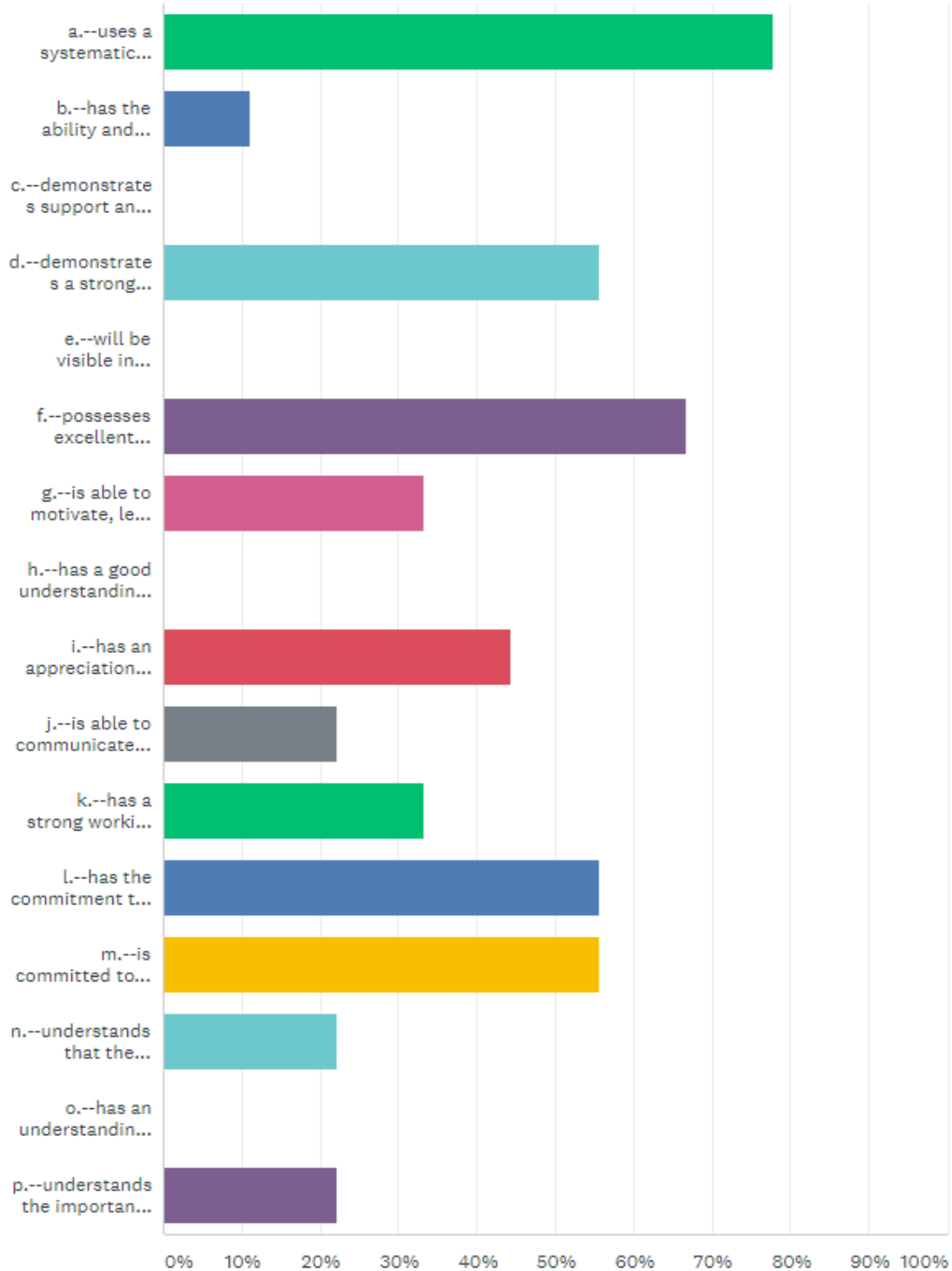
Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...



## ADMINISTRATORS

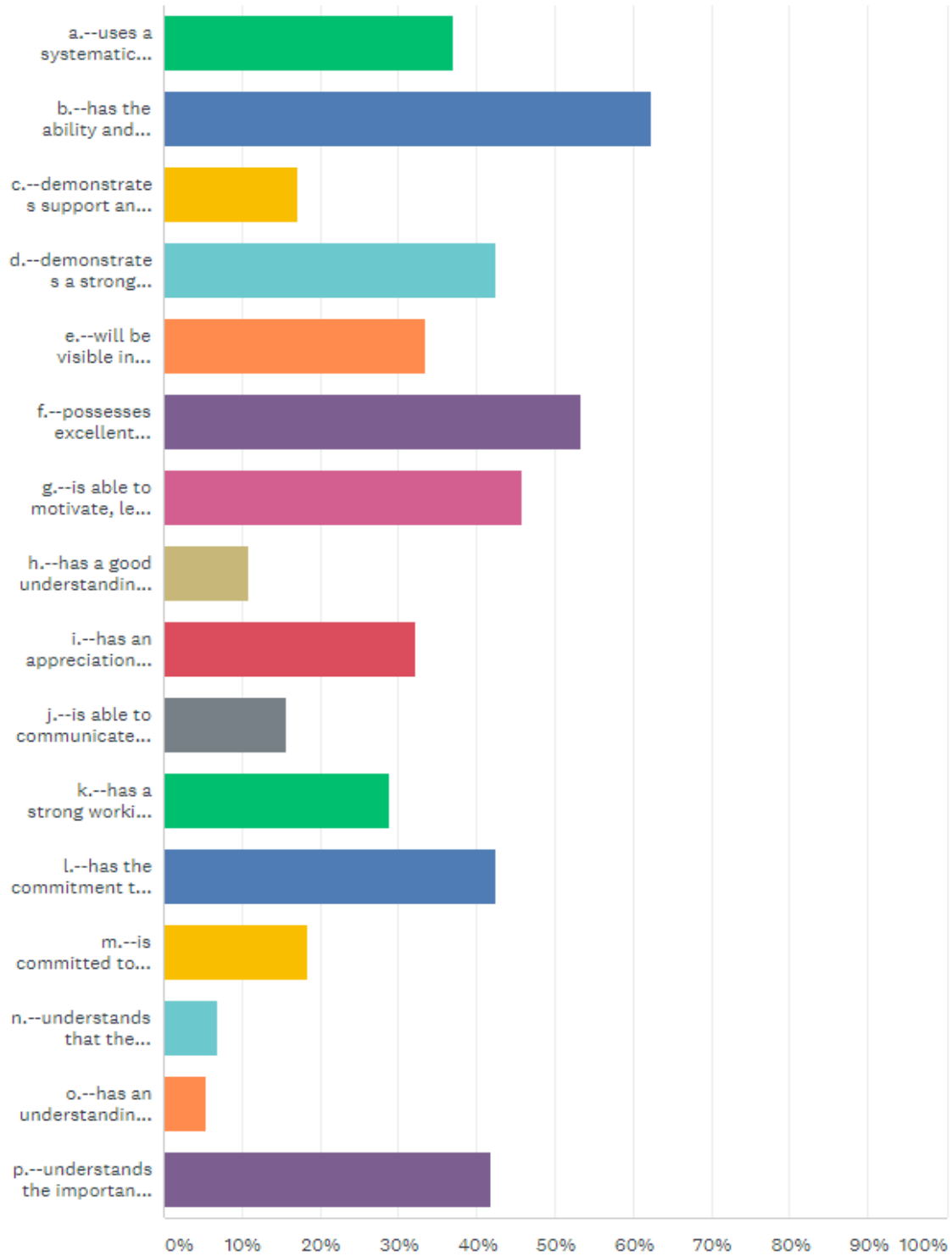
N=9

Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...



**PARENTS**  
**N=146**

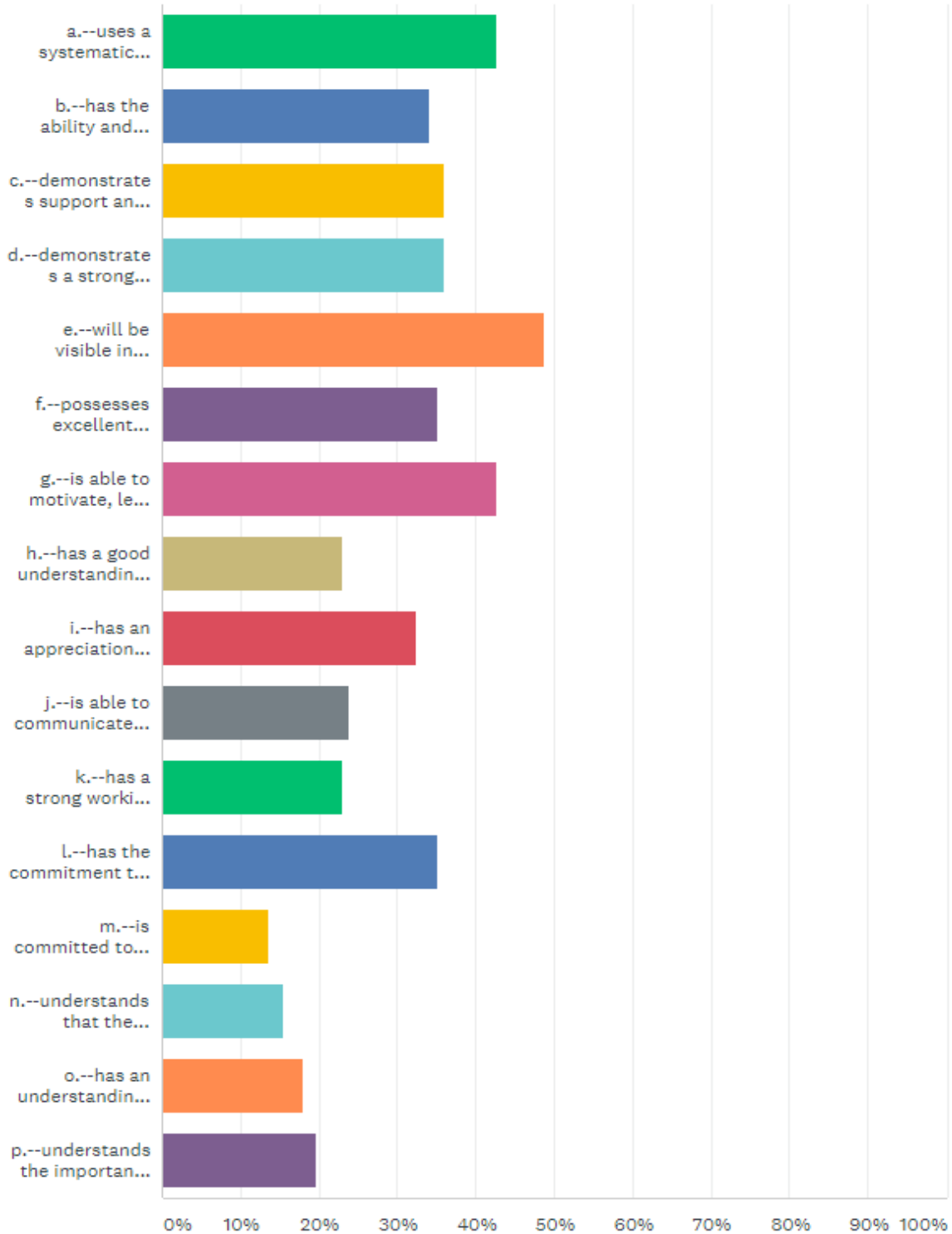
Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...





**STUDENTS**  
**N=117**

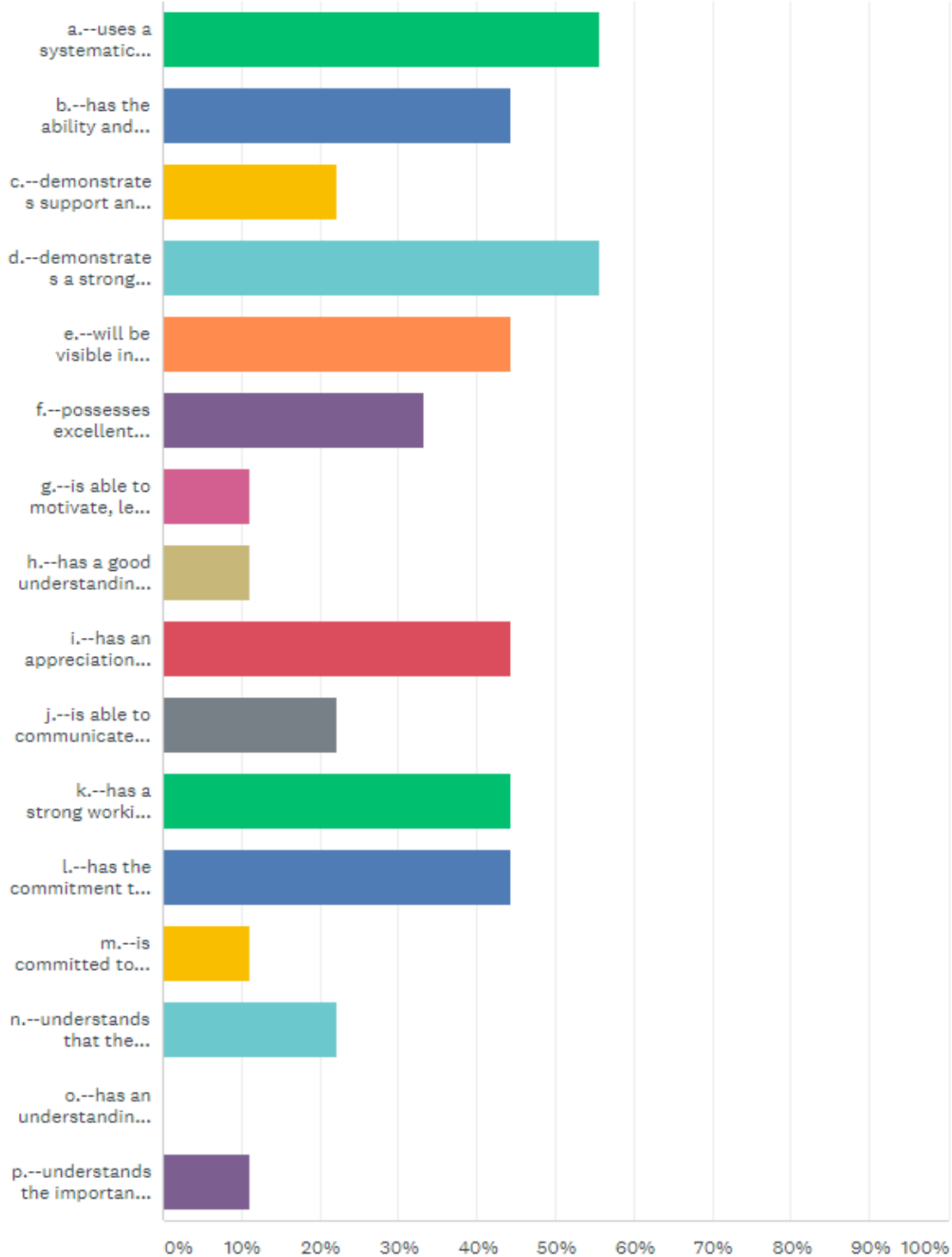
Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...



## COMMUNITY MEMBER

N=9

Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...



**OTHER  
N=11**

Q1. Of the qualities/skills/attributes listed in "a" - "p" below, choose the FIVE (5) you think are the most important for the new Superintendent's success in this school district. I would like a leader who...

