
Profile of the Paul Cuffee Superintendent Candidate



Created by Northeast Education Consultant Group LLC

FEBRUARY 2026

Introduction

The Paul Cuffee School District engaged Northeast Education Consultant Group LLC, led by Dr. Nicholas J. Spera and Dr. Victor Mercurio, to facilitate a comprehensive and inclusive Superintendent Search process. The purpose of this profile is to clearly articulate the collective priorities, values, and expectations of the Paul Cuffee community regarding its next Superintendent, as expressed through broad stakeholder engagement.

This document is intended to guide the School Board in identifying candidates whose leadership philosophy, experience, and personal qualities align with the needs and aspirations of the Paul Cuffee School community.

Community Engagement & Data Collection Process

The Superintendent Candidate Profile was developed through a multi-method engagement process designed to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and transparency.

Engagement methods included:

- A district-wide community survey distributed in English and Spanish to families, staff, and community members
- In-person forums for staff on January 22, 2026
- In-person forum for families on January 22, 2026
- One virtual community forum via Google Meets on January 26, 2026

These efforts ensured that feedback reflected a wide range of perspectives across grade levels, roles, and lived experiences within the Paul Cuffee School District.

It shall be noted that the number of participants for each session had some repeated individuals who attended more than one forum. Below are the totals for each session:

FEEDBACK FORUM	PARTICIPANTS
Community Survey (English & Spanish)	21
In-Person Forum for Staff	14
In-Person Forum for Community	10
Virtual Forum for Community	11
TOTAL	56

Leadership Expertise & Management Priorities

Community members were asked to rank the most important areas of expertise and dimensions of school district leadership for the next Superintendent.

Highest-Priority Areas Identified

Across survey responses, the following leadership domains emerged as most critical:

- **Strong staff development, team building, and opportunities for professional growth**
Emphasizing retention, morale, and long-term sustainability of high-quality educators
- **Effective communication and community engagement**
Highlighting transparency, collaboration, and visible leadership
- **Distinguished record of improving student learning**
Demonstrating the ability to raise academic outcomes while supporting whole-child development
- **Budget and finance expertise and resourcefulness**
Ensuring responsible fiscal management, sustainability, and creative funding strategies
- **Educational leadership that emphasizes curriculum, instruction, strategic planning, and technology integration**

Moderate emphasis was also placed on being a **Change Agent and Innovative Thinker**, while experience with **facilities management and long-term planning** was viewed as comparatively less critical. Repeated mentions of innovator and collaborator were heard in each forum. Moreover, the desire for a renewed look at the maritime theme was a common message from stakeholders.

Desired Personal Qualities of the Next Superintendent

- **Callout:** *Trust and relationship-centered leadership emerged as cross-cutting themes in all forums.*

Survey respondents also identified personal qualities and leadership attributes they most value in the next Superintendent.

Most Desired Characteristics

The data reflects a strong preference for a leader who is:

- **Accessible, approachable, and visible** within schools and the broader community
- **Student-centered**, with decisions grounded in the best interests of students
- **Able to inspire community confidence** through credibility and trust
- **Collaborative**, valuing shared decision-making and stakeholder voice
- **Decisive and resilient**, with sound judgment and problem-solving skills

Additional valued traits included integrity, courage, proactive leadership, creative problem-solving, and the ability to honor diverse perspectives.

Perceived Strengths of Paul Cuffee School

Community members consistently identified several defining strengths of the Paul Cuffee School District.

Key Themes from Open-Ended Responses

1. A Strong, Student-Centered Staff Culture

Respondents emphasized the dedication, passion, and commitment of teachers and support staff to student learning, emotional well-being, and overall success. Small class sizes and close relationships were frequently cited as allowing for meaningful connections between students and educators.

2. A Deep Sense of Community

Paul Cuffee is widely viewed as a close-knit, inclusive community where families, staff, and students feel connected. Many respondents described community as the primary reason staff remain at the school and families feel invested.

3. Strong Relationships and Communication

Positive teacher-student relationships, accessible educators, and consistent communication—particularly at the elementary level—were repeatedly highlighted.

4. Family Engagement and Shared Mission

Families are seen as active partners who care deeply about the school and its mission, contributing to a culture of collaboration and mutual support.

Most Significant Challenges Facing Paul Cuffee School

While community pride is strong, respondents were candid about significant challenges requiring focused leadership.

Major Challenge Areas Identified

1. Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation

Concerns were raised about limited funding, budget priorities, and the need for additional revenue streams, grants, partnerships, and fundraising. Many expressed the desire for fiscal decisions that directly support students, staff, and programming.

2. Trust, Transparency, and Staff Support

A recurring theme was the erosion of trust between educators and district leadership. Respondents emphasized the need for transparency, inclusive decision-making, and leadership that listens to and supports staff.

3. Teacher Retention and Wellness

High turnover—particularly at the middle school level—was linked to morale, working conditions, compensation, and insufficient support for administrators and teachers.

4. Middle School Climate and Student Support

Significant concerns were expressed regarding student behavior, safety, staffing levels, facilities, and consistency of expectations in the middle school. Families and staff called for stronger structures, additional personnel, and improved student supports.

5. Special Education and Multilingual Learner Services

Respondents noted the need to revisit service delivery models for students with disabilities and MLLs, with an emphasis on proactive, innovative, and compliant practices.

6. Enrollment, Retention, and Program Identity

Community members expressed concern about declining enrollment, particularly at the upper school, and the loss of Paul Cuffee's distinctive maritime and Quaker-inspired programming.

7. Equity, Representation, and Inclusion

Feedback highlighted the importance of recruiting and retaining educators of color, ensuring equitable support for all student groups, and valuing leadership that reflects and understands the community.

Leadership Implications for Superintendent Candidates

K–12 Unity and Organizational Coherence

The next Superintendent must intentionally **restore unity across the K–12 continuum**, ensuring alignment of expectations, culture, communication, and instructional vision across elementary, middle, and high school levels. Respondents emphasized the need for a cohesive district identity rather than disconnected schools.

Regaining the “Magic” of Paul Cuffee

Community members consistently referenced the need to **regain the “magic”** that once made Paul Cuffee one of the most sought-after schools in the region. This includes:

- Reinvigorating the school’s **distinctive mission and identity**
- Addressing **high school enrollment challenges**, including open seats
- Revitalizing **high school athletics and extracurricular offerings**
- Strengthening **K–12 staff retention**, morale, and professional pride
- Increasing the **attractiveness of open positions** to grow the applicant pool

Trust as the Central Leadership Imperative

Across surveys and all forums, **trust** emerged as the most consistent and urgent theme. Stakeholders called for leadership that rebuilds trust through transparency, relationship-building, and inclusive decision-making.

A “Vrabel-Esque” Leadership Approach

Respondents described the ideal Superintendent as demonstrating a **“Vrabel-esque” leadership style**—a reference to the New England Patriots Head Coach—characterized by:

- Deep investment in **relationships**
- A **strong work ethic culture**
- High expectations paired with genuine care for people
- Consistency, accountability, and credibility

This leadership approach reflects the community’s desire for a Superintendent who leads with both **heart and discipline**, fostering unity, pride, and sustained excellence.

Based on community feedback, the ideal Superintendent candidate for Paul Cuffee School will:

- Be a **visible, student-centered instructional leader**
- Demonstrate **fiscal responsibility and strategic resource development**
- Rebuild **trust through transparency, collaboration, and consistency**

- Support and retain high-quality staff through **recognition, professional growth, and wellness**
 - Address middle school challenges with urgency and care
 - Honor and revitalize the school's **mission, identity, and sense of community**
 - Lead proactively while engaging stakeholders in meaningful decision-making
-

Conclusion

The Paul Cuffee community is deeply invested in its schools and clearly articulated both pride and concern throughout this process. Stakeholders are seeking a Superintendent who can unify the district, stabilize systems, and lead with integrity, compassion, and vision.

This profile reflects a shared hope for leadership that strengthens trust, honors the community's values, and ensures a sustainable and thriving future for Paul Cuffee School.

*Prepared by Northeast Education Consultant Group LLC
Dr. Nicholas J. Spera | Dr. Victor Mercurio*