



**RIVERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL**  
**Principal Search Focus Group/Needs Assessment**

In preparation for the selection of a new principal for Riverview High School, a focus group and needs assessment was conducted on January 23, 2018 from 5-7pm in the school cafeteria. The purpose of the needs assessment was to gather information about what is presently working well at Riverview High School; to identify traditions, programs and activities that should be preserved by a new administrator; to describe some of the challenges that a new principal will need to manage and to compile a list of characteristics that staff members and parents believe the new school principal should exhibit.

The focus group is intended to provide potential applicants for the principal's position with some insights relative to the educational, leadership and management needs of Riverview High School from the perspective of the 23 school staff members, parents and community members who participated in the focus group. This summary of the information gathered at the meeting will be posted with the job description for the principal's position.

Sarasota County School Board Executive Director of High Schools, Stephen Cantees welcomed the participants and explained the current status of Riverview High School and its need for a new principal; Human Resources Executive Director, Roy Sprinkle discussed the hiring process and timeline for hiring a principal and Mina Ajrab, Tracey Beeker and Scott Ferguson with the communications department facilitated the focus group. This was the first time an electronic data system, Mentimeter, was used to capture group responses from participants. Additional feedback and information was informally captured and recorded. Tracey Beeker prepared this report based on all data compiled from the focus group.

The participants in the focus group were asked the following four questions:

1. What's going well?
2. What traditions, programs or activities should continue?
3. What challenges should the new principal expect?
4. Describe the professional experience, leadership style and personal qualities the new principal should possess.

A summary of the responses to each question at the focus group is presented below. A complete list of responses recorded during the focus group submitted by attendees as well as those who could not be present are included as appendices to this report.

### **Question 1: What's going well?**

Overwhelmingly, the respondents believe the IB program is going well and that it's an important program to continue. For those participating Tuesday evening, many thought it was important to expand beyond the IB program to ensure all children have an opportunity for success. Throughout the responses, the new administration and teaching staff were among the top-noted elements going well at the school. The term "pride" was used a lot: pride in Riverview's academic and athletic accomplishments, in arts/music programs, in the community and among staff.

#### **Academics:**

It's clear the IB program at Riverview is going well and has experienced successful pass rates for students. There is a tradition of excellence that many have experienced at the school. Some noted that there is diverse coursework and group activities that offers something for everyone. Many noted there was a sense of accomplishment with the A+ school rating. It was also noted that there is excellent ESE support for all levels of students. In addition, the Stars to Starfish program was mentioned by several respondents. Although there are some areas needing improvement, there was optimism for the future for issues such as school attendance, bullying and security measures that are now in place at Riverview to promote a positive learning experience.

#### **Athletics:**

There is great pride in the athletic programs at Riverview, although no specific program was called out by respondents.

#### **Music/Arts:**

Overwhelmingly, there is a love for the music program at Riverview, especially the Kiltie Band. This was mentioned by several respondents both in person and manually. The Kiltie Band is an important and unique identifier of the school.

#### **Staff:**

Throughout the responses, the majority of those who participated believe Riverview has a strong teaching staff dedicated to student outcomes. Words such as dedicated, strong, supportive, caring, and hardworking were used to describe the staff of the school. It was also mentioned that there is a good relationship between the staff and parents. The guidance counselors of the school were also mentioned.

#### **Community:**

Several respondents mentioned the Riverview Foundation and the support it provides the school as an important factor of the school.

### **Question 2: What school traditions, programs or activities should continue?**

As with question one, many of the respondents believed the IB program, Stars to Starfish, RAM JAM, Kiltie Band and football programs should continue under the leadership of the new principal. In addition, many noted the JROTC, marine science program, honor society, winter showcase, renaissance feast and musical performances should continue as well. There was also mention and support for the executive

internship program as an important aspect of Riverview High School as well as mentorship and tutoring programs. In addition, the rich history of the school and its place in the community were also important to preserve.

**Question 3: What challenges should the new principal expect?**

Many of the respondents are expecting the new principal to be passionate about and dedicated to Riverview High School and bring a sense of longevity and loyalty to the school for many years to come. Teacher fatigue, changing leadership, etc. were among the most noted by respondents in the focus group and survey. Although teachers are one of the shining assets of the school, there is a morale issue that will need to be addressed.

In addition, security and safety at the school were noted as challenges that need to be addressed by the new principal, as well as attendance and meeting the needs of a diverse population – especially those not in the IB program. It was also noted that internal communications can be improved so parents, students and staff are aware of the goings-on of the school at all times.

**Question 4: What professional, leadership and personal characteristics of a new principal would best fit Riverview High School?**

We posed this question in two parts about adjectives to describe the professional, leadership and personal traits needed in a principal. Top words included: committed (both personally and from a tenure perspective), IB-minded, collaborative, fair, strong communicator and strength of character rose above others. Additional words such as passionate, trustworthy, integrity, flexible, listener, creative and leader were also mentioned.

**Other:**

This was the first use of Mentimeter to capture responses from those in the focus group Monday evening. Overwhelmingly, the participants thought the use of new technology was an effective or very effective way to conduct the focus group. There were a few manual responses from those in attendance who did not have a phone as well as those who chose to fill out a form outside of the focus group. One question that came up several times was the ability for students to participate in the focus group. Going forward, it's recommended that enhanced communications, especially to students, be employed to generate a well-rounded scope of responses