

Introduction

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) is currently in the midst of a superintendent search following the retirement of the district’s current superintendent. During its search, the district has been soliciting community input through informal focus groups and by offering a district-wide survey. Ahead of an upcoming Board of Trustee’s meeting, CFISD sought the support of Hanover Research (Hanover) to analyze two of the survey’s open-ended comments. These comments sought perceptions specifically about district strengths and areas of growth. To meet the district’s need, Hanover conducted a qualitative analysis of a randomized sample of the open-ended responses and provided a set of key findings. The results of this analysis can support district leaders in their communication with the Board of Trustees about districtwide perceptions to help inform the search for a new superintendent.

Methodology

This report provides the results of the closed question responses and a digestible summary of responses to the survey’s open-ended questions. Each survey respondent was asked the following open-ended prompts:

- What are the greatest strengths of the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District and the surrounding communities?
- What are the greatest challenges which the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District currently faces?

Due to the expedited timeline and amount of data, Hanover took a sample (10%) of responses to analyze to distill key findings for each question. Before analyzing the open-ended responses, Hanover removed blank, irrelevant, or repeated open-ended responses during data cleaning. Hanover also removed such answers as “unsure” and “none,” in favor of responses that share meaningful data and appropriately answer the survey question.

Utilizing a random sample of 10% of responses for each question will achieve 95% or greater saturation of salience. This is because only the most essential key findings are needed, the two questions are narrowly defined (e.g., strengths and weaknesses of the district), and responses are limited in length due to the format of the gathering responses. Saturation of salience has been found with smaller sample sizes given similar parameters, however, 10% of responses (which is approximately 400 responses per question) is a robust sample from which to provide the requested information. It should be noted, however, that the analysis provided depth of understanding about the particular questions rather than statistical significance or generalizable conclusions. Hanover then developed the top key themes using cleaned, relevant response content. The following figure details the total survey responses and the total coding sample for the analysis.

QUESTION	TOTAL SURVEY RESPONSES	TOTAL CLEANED RESPONSES IN SAMPLE
Strengths	4,563	456
Weaknesses/Areas of Growth	4,582	458

Five Key Areas of Strengths in the District

Survey respondents indicate that the five key areas of strength for CFISD are as follows:

Diversity and Inclusion

- The district is socio-economically diverse, both among staff and students, and is a leader in surrounding districts in its efforts to meet the needs of varied ethnicities and to serve all students.
- Instruction is consistently equitable no matter the school.
- The district listens to and values diverse perspectives among community members and parents.

Community Support and Involvement

- The surrounding community is highly involved and supportive of the district.
- CFISD often serves as a hub for the larger community in times of crisis, such as during Hurricane Harvey.
- The district is highly considerate of parents and their scheduling challenges and teachers regularly communicate with parents.
- The district, while very large, is perceived to maintain the feeling of a small town or family.

High-Quality Programming: Academics and Enrichment

- CFISD teachers are well educated, and the level of instruction is high.
- The curriculum is rigorous for all students, and district test scores overall are strong.
- Students have many opportunities for enrichment and college and career readiness programming.

Leadership

- District leadership is strong, prepared ahead of legislative changes, and action oriented.
- District leaders value employees and set up systems to make CFISD an outstanding place to work, to teach, and to attend school.
- The district demonstrates fiscal responsibility by being smart with money and accountable to taxpayers.

Finances, Resources, and Facilities

- CFISD has a strong tax base.
- The district facilities were built or remodeled with security as a priority and are up to date.

Five Key Areas of Challenges and Areas of Growth in the District

Survey respondents indicate that the five key areas of challenge and growth for CFISD are as follows:

Teacher and Staff Retention and Support

- The district risks of losing high-quality teachers due to the challenge of mediating political issues that enter the classroom.
- CFISD doesn't sufficiently compensate or support teachers who are asked to do more and more with less. Funds from bonds should go to teachers, classroom resources, and other academic priorities.
- Teacher burnout is an issue especially among elementary teachers who are adapting to the new, state-legislated ELA curriculum.

Implementation of Equitable Practices

- CFISD faces challenges due to an expanding population and increasingly diverse socio-demographics. Minority students make up three-quarters of the student population, and yet district leadership does not yet reflect this reality.
- The district is at risk of favoring certain student populations rather than balancing the needs of all groups, for example, by favoring only the most vocal, or only high versus low achievers and vice versa.
- Special education assistance and administrative staff at the elementary level in particular is seen as severely lacking, with serious discrepancies between what is promised and what is enacted.
- CFISD lacks a dual-immersion program in spite of the high number of bilingual students, and also needs more translators.
- Student opportunities and resources, like field trips and financial support to participate in activities like band, are not distributed or offered equitably across all schools.

Discipline and Socio-Emotional/Behavioral Health and Safety

- Concerns are increasing about bullying, and the prevalence of fights, as well as inappropriate sexual behavior and the use of drugs and vaping, even in elementary schools.
- Students need greater structure, as well as appropriate consequences and consistent enforcement for misbehavior.
- Behavioral systems in use at CFISD are not consistent and standardized across the district; most campuses use PBIS, while others use a different program.
- CFISD does not adequately support the mental health and well-being of students and teachers.

Community Disagreements About Curriculum and Pedagogy

- Differing political beliefs among parents and board members are interfering with the ability for teachers to present balanced and unbiased classroom instruction, and to teach critical thinking skills.
- Members of the CFISD community express concerns about the teaching of educational theories and philosophies, such as critical race theory, diversity and equity, and content related to transgender people.
- Other members express concern about proposed policies, like book banning and the imposition of a religiously based curriculum.

Growth of the District

- Population growth is straining the current facilities.
- The middle and high schools are too big to give students individualized attention.