



FINAL REPORT

Summary of Findings from the New Principal Profile Questionnaire

Matthew Halton High School

January 2016

Introduction & Overview of the Principal Profile Development Process

The current principal of Matthew Halton High School is scheduled to take up a new position in February 2016. Recognizing the critically important role played by the principal of a school, the School Council was keen to seek input from their key stakeholders on the school's educational priorities and the professional/personal characteristics of a new leader. The idea to develop a 'new principal profile questionnaire' was raised at a School Council meeting on **October 14th, 2015**. For the purpose of gathering information to assist in the recruitment of a new principal, the Council tasked a seven person steering committee comprising parents, teachers, students and support staff to develop and distribute a questionnaire and then collect, synthesize, and prepare a summary report of the responses.

A questionnaire with five open-ended questions was developed by the committee on **October 20th, 2015** and distributed to the following community stakeholders on **October 28th, 2015**:

Alberta Southwest Regional Economic Alliance	Alberta Parks	Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)	Pincher Creek Allied Arts Council
Pincher Creek Community Adult Learning Council	Pincher Creek Chamber of Commerce	Pincher Creek Public Library	Pincher Creek Rotary Club
Regional Stewardship – Lethbridge College	Saint Michael's School Principal	Town of Pincher Creek Municipal Office	

A focus group discussion soliciting the views of staff members to the questionnaire was conducted at a staff meeting on **November 4th** with approximately 25 people.

Questionnaires were distributed to parents by School Council members during Parent/Teacher interviews at the school on **November 24th and 25th, 2015**.

Eight focus group discussions to complete the questionnaire were convened for students at the school between **November 23rd and 30th, 2015**. Approximately 185 students in all grades except grade 10 participated in the focus group discussions.

Including the collective responses from the focus group discussions, 34 completed questionnaires were submitted to the School Council.

The committee met on **December 1st, 2015** for three hours to synthesize the responses and identify the main themes arising from the completed questionnaires. John Taylor was tasked to take the notes from the meeting, as well as the completed questionnaires and draft a report summarizing the findings.

The draft summary report was completed and sent to committee members for vetting on **January 7th, 2016**. The final report was discussed, amended and endorsed at a School Council meeting on **Tuesday January 19th, 2016**.

Steering Committee Members			
Tracey Clarke (Parent)	Lisa Dupuis (Parent)	Lorraine Morningbull (Native Liaison Counselor)	Ian Robertson (Teacher)
Shannon Scherger (Trustee)	John Taylor (Teacher)	Miranda Van Loon (Student)	

The Key Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Most Wanted in the New Principal at Matthew Halton High School

After careful analysis of the data collected through the new principal profile questionnaire, the Matthew Halton School Council would like to recruit a new principal that possess the following knowledge, skills and attributes:

1. Committed to continuously learning and applying current evidence-based research and best practices in K-12 education. Proven ability creating innovative learning environments that promote and support personalized, student centered learning that is applied in a 'real world' context. A creative and entrepreneurial mindset with the skills and experience to lead collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning.
2. A strong belief in the central importance of high-quality relationships in student achievement and the overall success of the school. A systems thinker with a demonstrated ability to establish and nurture positive relationships with key school stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, school-based staff and the wider community. Actively seeks the views of all stakeholders on important matters and decisions effecting the operation of the school. An empathic, caring listener that responds quickly and appropriately to the expressed concerns of any and all stakeholders of Matthew Halton High School.
3. Committed to supporting and expanding the school's existing role as an important hub for life-long learning within the community of Pincher Creek. Adept at building and sustaining a positive, inclusive school culture and learning environment that addresses the diverse learning needs of students and staff – academic and non-academic – personal and professional.
4. A proven track record in school instructional leadership that demonstrates high levels of student excellence in both academic achievement and 21st Century competencies. Several years of practical experience facilitating the development and implementation of authentic, hands-on, experiential learning programs that actively engage students in their own education. A strong belief in providing high-quality, focused career guidance and pathway planning that prepares all students for success beyond high school. Proven ability to collaborate with other schools, employers, post-secondary institutions, government agencies and community organizations to enhance student learning and support high school transition.
5. Working knowledge and appreciation of the unique circumstances and challenges facing schools in small rural communities. Willing and able to live in the Pincher Creek area, actively participate in and support community events and assist with community development efforts in conjunction with the effective leadership of Matthew Halton High School.

A complete summary of the data collected through the new principal profile questionnaire is found below:



New Principal Profile Questionnaire

As you are aware, Sandy McDuffe, principal of Matthew Halton High School has accepted a position with the Rocky View School Division beginning in late February 2016. To assist in the recruitment of a new principal the School Council is seeking input from students, parents, teachers and community stakeholders about our school's educational priorities and preferred professional/personal characteristics of the new leader. Your thoughtful response to this survey is greatly appreciated. Completed questionnaires should be submitted to the school office or emailed to: hankeys@lrsd.ab.ca

School Mission Statement:

“Empowering every student to achieve their goals and pursue their dreams”

As you think of a new principal for MHHS, please respond to the following questions:

- 1. What is the school currently doing that you would like to see continued? (i.e., strategies, practices, processes, programs, initiatives, etc.)**

Focus on Experiential Learning

The school's strong focus on practical, hands-on, experiential learning is viewed as a definite strength by all school stakeholders. Almost every submitted questionnaire addressed the topic of Experiential Learning Week (ELW). The vast majority of respondents see ELW as a valuable and worthwhile practice to continue. Providing students with opportunities to engage in Special Projects on topics of personal interest is seen as a positive strategy to promote personalized learning. Upcoming projects such as the “Off the Grid” greenhouse project, the Beauvais Provincial Park interpretive signage project with the Grade 10 ELA students and the wetlands project with the Grade 8 students were cited as excellent examples of high quality experiential learning opportunities. Students participating in extended field trips to the Gulf Islands and Europe, and at conferences such as the Accelerate South 50 on entrepreneurship are also seen as impactful learning experiences. Students and parents are particularly satisfied with the ‘trade options’ (mechanics, welding, construction, foods) provided at Matthew Halton High School and want to keep them as an integral part of the school's education offerings. Similar sentiments were directed towards the band and music program.

“I appreciate, like and wish there was more time allotted to the Experiential Learning Weeks. They are so valuable when kids are allowed to step outside the school, step outside the ‘thinking box’ of normal curricular activities and put what they know to work in the community, put what they don't know, but have to learn, out there, and apply it. It gives a ‘real life’ edge to the whole learning process for me. Any school outreach programs that head off in that direction are valuable and worthwhile.”

Community Outreach and Inter-Agency/Inter-School Collaboration

Survey respondents are pleased with Matthew Halton High School's efforts to engage with the wider community for the mutual benefits of student learning and community development. The community celebrations of learning following ELWs are valued. The Community Conversation on Learning is viewed as a positive process for identifying learning priorities and facilitating cooperation between education stakeholders. The school's participation in the development of the Regional Centers for Arts, Creativity and Entrepreneurship (RCADE) project; the school's efforts to integrate its learning commons with local library services for mutual support; and its cooperation with Alberta Parks and the Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association to launch the Alberta Green Schools initiative in Pincher Creek were cited as good examples of interagency collaboration. The positive partnership developing between St. Michael's School and Matthew Halton High School is viewed by many stakeholders as something not only worth keeping, but expanded into other areas that would be beneficial to students of both schools. Several respondents are also keen to see enhanced collaboration between all schools in the community to better support student learning. The emerging partnership between Lethbridge College and Matthew Halton High School in relation to Experiential Learning Weeks, the Pathways to Success strategy and expanding dual credit opportunities must continue to be nurtured along with the school's relationships with other post-secondary institutions.

"I've been particularly impressed with the school's practice of reaching out to the community (starting with the dialogue events) and engaging all sectors of the community in the learning process – not just for the students at Matthew Halton, but for all community members."

Effective School Strategies, Structures and Learning Supports

Many respondents expressed strong support for the "Pathways to Success" strategy that will personalize the learning path for high school students from the beginning of grade 10 until their graduation in grade 12 – preparing them for both career and post-secondary success. The ongoing development of the school learning commons through the acquisition of new technology equipment and teaching capacity is seen as a priority. The school's participation in Moving Forward with High School Redesign is viewed as a positive step in the future direction of the school. The current strong focus on academic success is appreciated and complements the other non-academic pursuits promoted at the school.

Sports, both school sponsored teams and intramural leagues are highly valued by both students and parents, and are considered an important part of the school culture. The student council itself and the activities it organizes to enhance school spirit and promote community service are appreciated, especially by students. Extra-curricular activities (especially at lunch), assemblies, pep rallies and school clubs are also considered significant features of the school experience noted by respondents. Student participation in the Canada Skills competitions is viewed as an important opportunity for Matthew Halton students – one that can be further expanded upon. Students and staff see the Hawks Nest, cafeteria and hot lunches as a great asset! The relatively low pupil/teacher ratio at the school is something to keep. The Outreach School at the Napi Friendship Center is considered an "important asset for the community" and needs to stay.

Students and parents greatly appreciate the 'extra help' classes provided at lunch by teachers. The extra time teachers take to explain concepts in class is also appreciated. Teachers value their participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and the collaborative learning/planning time embedded in the schedule. They feel the information and communication flow is excellent and should be maintained. Survey respondents indicated support for the "enthusiastic booster club", learning support services and the school's anti-bullying focus. Respondents noted the presence of "strong support staff" in the school.

2. What new ideas, program areas, or educational approaches to learning would you like to see start that are currently not in place?

Real World Application of Learning

Those responding to the survey appreciate the school's focus on experiential learning and would like to see it embedded more widely across school subjects and programs. There is a desire for more learning to happen outside of the classroom through 'real world' projects that are relevant to the local community context. Engaging high school students in the real-life economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities to be found in the community and broader region was proposed. In general, respondents want students to be exposed to the widest "range of opportunities out there in the world – the different jobs coming up in the future". Parents want to know what the job market trends are so they can engage with their children knowledgeably around career planning.

Technology and Entrepreneurial Skill Development

As was noted by one respondent, technology is rapidly expanding into every part of our lives – even the simplest jobs require the use of computers. Many respondents want to be sure the students going through the school system are technologically proficient. They want students to learn how to use and apply technology for their own learning, for problem solving and creative pursuits. Students need to know what technology is out there, how to use it and how to fix it, otherwise they will be at a disadvantage when they leave high school. Students indicated their strong interest in developing computer programming skills. However, as one person stated, the technology proficiencies should not replace other functions and skills such as cursive writing, drawing with a pencil, painting with a brush and modelling soft clay. Students need to be able to use their visual capacity and their other sensory capacities as well as working competently with a machine. Conversation and communication are critical skills to develop.

A common theme arising from the survey responses is that school programming should support the development of "a knowledge based, entrepreneurial skill set." There is a desire to see more entrepreneurial focused learning happening that 'gets' and keeps kids thinking outside of the box. Our youth must therefore be prepared, positioned and supported as agents of social and economic innovation and entrepreneurship (leaders), with 'personal, community and economic stewardship' as the explicit purpose of innovation. One respondent noted the proposed Regional Centers for Art, Design and Entrepreneurship (RCADE) project will present a great opportunity for students to engage and create with technology when it is up and running.

Interdisciplinary Teaching/Learning & Programming Flexibility

There is a shared belief that Matthew Halton High School's participation in the Moving Forward with High School Redesign will lead to more flexibility in course delivery and high school programming – something wanted by students, parents and teachers alike. There is also interest in promoting collaborative learning across grades and expanding project-based learning that incorporates curricular elements from several different subjects. In that regard, there is a desire by staff for "interdisciplinary planning" time to co-create cross-curricular learning projects/units etc.

School as an Integral Part of a Larger 'Learning Community'

A theme arising from this survey parallels what was similarly expressed in the first Pincher Creek community conversation on learning in June 2014 – that schools could be the anchor points or hubs to support all types of learning for all types of learners across the age spectrum in the community. Schools, in collaboration with other community organizations, would be places for "celebrating our community's story, resources, history, language, and diversity – our place on the planet". They would be places of innovation and creativity – for example, schools could be leaders in renewable energy applications and reducing energy waste in our community. Some respondents would like to see coordination of course

offerings and timetables between Matthew Halton High School and St. Michael's School "that would more easily allow students to move back and forth between schools to access learning opportunities at either school." Also, timetable coordination and flexibility could "allow students to complete courses at either one of the schools within a school year to stay on track for graduation." This kind of collaboration, with student, parent and teacher input, could potentially widen the learning experiences available to all students in the community. To maintain and continually renew ourselves as a learning community, someone suggested "the accumulation of 'success stories' from current and graduating students is something to pay attention to. It would provide a continuum. 'I left on this date and here's where I am!' Educational growth doesn't stop when you walk out of the school. Leaving the school shouldn't mean 'goodbye'. We need to capture the ongoing stories, skills and experiences of our students and feed it back into the life of the school" and community.

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Respondents would like to see more learning opportunities related to Piikani culture and aboriginal experience in Canada. There was also a call to 'embed' the recommendations arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report into school practices wherever relevant and possible. Others suggested that more 'life courses' be offered on topics such as finances, living arrangements, insurance payments, budgeting for groceries and household expenses, buying a house etc. There was a suggestion the school consider providing advanced academic courses such as those in the International Baccalaureate program. Although several CTS 'trades' courses are currently offered at Matthew Halton High School some people would like to see even more trade oriented courses offered. Courses in heavy duty mechanics, cosmetology and sewing were specifically mentioned. In general, students indicated an interest in having more choices for options. Junior high students wanted to choose their options in order of preference. Suggested option classes were rock band, drama, second languages such as French and Spanish, sports such as hockey, and athletic options in general. There was a concern that students taking the band option had limited choice for other options.

Other Ideas for Consideration

Someone recommended getting truancy officers to work with students having chronic attendance problems. Someone thought students shouldn't be able to leave the school campus until grade 9. Grade 7 students felt they should be allowed to leave campus. There was a suggestion of having a 'frosch week' to initiate Grade 7 students into the school culture when they first arrive. Other ideas suggested specifically by the student body included:

- Making it possible for students to be in classrooms at lunch to do school work
- Having more lunch time activities
- Supporting the formation of more clubs
- Creating a cheer leaders squad
- Having more school spirit events and movie nights
- Creating some 'free time' in the gym for students
- Putting in an arcade
- Having a flex block
- Putting a debit machine in the Hawk's Nest

3. What improvements to current programming, procedures, or other aspects of MHHS would you like to recommend?

Some respondents left this question blank. Several felt they didn't know enough about the day-to-day operation of the school to comment. Others stated things were running smoothly at the school and were satisfied with the current programming, procedures and other aspects of Matthew Halton High School.

“Overall things are very good!”

“I recommend a leader for your school that can continue building the amazing ideas that have already been started.”

Personalizing Learning

“Keep working on the personalized learning approach – helping students to discover themselves and be engaged in their own learning. Draw on learning opportunities from a variety of sources and not just what can be done by teachers within the school.” Respondents expressed a desire to see “programming opening up to become more flexible and tailored towards student interest.” Although recognizing the challenge of this task given the large student population, they still felt it was worth pursuing. Some people feel there are still not enough option classes that are relevant to student interests and would help them get the experience and training they need to pursue their personal goals.

Communication

There was a suggestion the school could have a more welcoming atmosphere for those entering the building. A few respondents suggested there could be better three-way communication between parents, students and the school. Several people felt the school’s website could be improved and updated more regularly, especially in regards to snow days.

Peer Tutoring/Extra Help

While appreciating the extra help offered to students by teachers during lunch hours, some people feel more can be done to help those students who are struggling with various courses. A few respondents recommended a peer tutoring program that would see older students helping younger students who are struggling with their studies. There was also a suggestion extra help be offered during class time. Someone thought the “catch up days” offered to Junior High students were valuable and would like to see more of them.

Hands-On, Interactive Activities in the School

Respondents would like to see more ‘hands-on’, interactive activities occurring in classrooms in general, and more experiments and hands-on experiences in science classes specifically. People would like to see students making connections between what they are learning in the classroom and what occurs in “the real world and everyday life.” A couple of responses indicated a need for a better chemistry lab and equipment. Someone thought the school didn’t need a virtual welder.

Experiential Learning Week

As was mentioned above, there was overwhelming support from all stakeholders – students, parents, teachers and community members for Experiential Learning Weeks. However, a few respondents question the appropriateness of these weeks for grade 12 students in particular and to a lesser degree, grade 10 and 11 students. These respondents feel ELW takes away too much “core subject” instructional time from students who are close to graduation. Someone suggested the school “enrich and expand frontiers of opportunity for experiential learning weeks.”

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Several respondents would like to see a greater emphasis put on technology. They would like more instruction given and more courses offered on technology in general and in ICT specifically. Some feel the school could better utilize the technology it already has. Someone suggested students should be knowledgeable and skilled in applying “best practices in ICT for personal, community and economic development.” Some students indicated their preference for desk top computers over Chrome books.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Some respondents want to see programs in the school or discussion in classrooms that will help students develop skills and strategies to adapt to the broad set of disruptive change they will experience over their lifetime. They would like to see the high school establish 'innovation' as an explicit and unifying theme for development and application of knowledge and creativity. A community member commented "the Lemonade Stand Course, using I-Pads, could be done a lot differently by having some hard, fast requirements, clear expectations and deliverables so that all the students showed up with a presentation and then were also developing presentation skills alongside their business idea. The overarching question could be "What problem in the world are you trying to solve with this business idea?"

Collaboration with Other Schools & Community Organizations

As noted in an earlier question, school stakeholders are satisfied overall with the levels of collaboration Matthew Halton High School has with other schools and community organizations. However, according to respondents this is still an area the school could build upon. People would like to see the school develop more working partnerships and cooperative initiatives with businesses, non-profit agencies and other organizations. Collaborating with other agencies around such community events as "Literacy Days" was suggested. Parents expressed an interest in having access to some learning opportunities. Again, as was expressed earlier, respondents are keen to see Matthew Halton High School "work more closely with other schools by collaborating on timetables and bussing." This would reduce competition, enhance cooperation and increase the range of learning opportunities available to students.

Timetables and Scheduling

Many people submitted comments related to timetabling and schedules. Someone thought the 'day 1 and 2' designations were confusing and thought they should be eliminated. Someone suggested there be no option classes on Friday. Someone wondered if there wasn't a better way to offer curriculum without shuttling kids back and forth to Napi. There were also suggestions to:

- extend the length of core courses
- have a longer 'Scrunch' on Fridays
- allow students to go to their lockers at lunch time
- remove the quarter semester system for junior high students
- allow spares for grade 11 students, and
- consider scheduling spares to better accommodate grade 12 students who are living and working out of town.

There was a call to adjust the schedule to allow for more cross-curricular teaching. Someone envisioned classes might one day be offered in a seminar style.

Staffing and School Spirit

There were some thoughts submitted in relation to staffing and school spirit. There was a comment made that only those teachers who know the curriculum and material should be teaching diploma-level courses. A couple of people wanted the school to "review teachers who are currently and obviously not doing a great job." Some wanted to see more 'aides' in the school. Someone suggested teachers be fair with their judgement of students.

Some respondents wanted to see more school spirit. This they say: "starts with staff in their everyday interactions with students... ALL STAFF! School spirit starts from the top down." People want the school to feel more like a community. Someone suggested this would be helped by having more teachers, administrators and support staff attending sports games and other school functions.

Career Preparation and Citizenship

Some respondents felt the school could place more emphasis on career and real life learning that prepares students for the future. It was recommended CALM not be offered online. Someone suggested the school could better “utilize experts in the community – companies, individuals, organizations. Teachers don’t have to do everything, especially if they don’t really know what they are doing (i.e. resumes).” People also thought the school could do more to promote “civic involvement and citizenship.” Someone wanted to see more opportunities for students to participate in the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP).

Athletics

Some people would like to see qualified coaches involved in the various school sports programs as well as greater participation and support by teachers and the school as a whole. It was noted this is difficult for teachers living outside of the community and that coaching sports will stretch a teacher’s day. Other comments made in relation to the school’s athletic programs included:

- Obtaining better Physical Education equipment
- Having team uniforms and/or getting new uniforms
- Having more sports programs/ diverse sports aimed at getting more students involved
- Putting in a climbing wall
- Setting up a weight room
- Having more gyms

Other Comments

Other suggestions to improve programming, procedures or other aspects of Matthew Halton High School included:

- The high school arts program should be different than the junior high program
- Being able to eat in class
- Having dances (formal)
- Getting better tables in the Hawk’s Nest
- Getting a different school mascot
- Stopping the automatic phone calls home
- Changing the dress code

4. What professional attributes, skills and personal qualities are important for the new principal to possess?

This section provides samples of the narrative submitted through the survey followed by a table of traits marked with brackets indicating how often the trait was mentioned.

“The new principal will need to be open-minded and understand what is going on in education right now as the whole system moves toward a more ‘student-centered’ approach to learning. This is a huge shift and requires us to listen to students so they drive what is happening in our schools. This is an extremely important concept because many people still believe adults should be driving student learning. It is also important the new principal operate in a collaborative fashion and is open to working with St. Michael’s School. Both of our schools have great strengths, and if combined, could offer students great learning opportunities across the community.”

“The academic qualifications will be important, but have the candidates for principal spent their time solely in academia? I would prefer someone with real world experience to complement the academic qualifications. Can the candidates apply the things they learned academically to the school in a way that is meaningful to the community? The community-school link is critical and is becoming increasingly more important. I want a principal that is going to be involved and engaged with the community. We need to see that interest in the community demonstrated. Learning needs to happen outside of the school.”

“The new principal will need a mix of skill sets. We need a principal that has a set of skills outside of and addition to their academic qualifications. Maybe they’ve been an entrepreneur, ran a farm and have a well-rounded, diverse set of skills and experiences to bring into the school. They understand the challenges coming forth in the world.”

“The principal needs to know his/or her students, be interested in them, know their names, know their interests and what they are doing in their lives besides school. They need to be able to tell a story about a student. The principal needs to care about, listen to and respect students and be able to build positive relationships with students, parents and school staff. Obviously, by this stage in their career, a principal should have strong leadership skills. The principal needs to be ‘forward looking’ to keep up with changes in society. The school system is still organized for the past. What is taught and how it is taught needs to change to reflect the changes happening in the world – especially in relation to technology.”

“The new principal must absolutely be an innovative “outside the box” thinker. The status quo is not acceptable. Ideally, the person would have some background or experience in career education and development. S/he would need to be resourceful and have demonstrated leadership in collaboration, particularly as it relates to inspiring community engagement. The person should be politically savvy – understand who’s who of the region, the various partners and resources to move new initiatives forward within the education system.”

“I think the new principal needs to be a good school representative for students, parents and staff. This includes being present for important school functions, sports, community events etc. The school needs a public face that students, staff and community can stand with.”

“I feel like the new principal should be open to all student issues – like school attire – making sure the rules apply to all students no matter what background they are from. Consistency is always good.”

“The principal needs humility; if someone knows more about something than you or brings forth an idea you haven’t heard of, be open to discussing and considering it.”

“We need one who believes in the vision and direction we already have.”

We want a principal that is:

- Courageous and entrepreneurial, with an appetite for complexity.
- A bottom-up system thinker with a universal (vs. parochial) knowledge base.
- A strong community builder, preferably with ample social and political skill.
- Someone who believes in (or even KNOWS about Inspiring Education)
- Self-accountable, but not self-deprecating.
- Humble and open-minded, but fair and decisive.
- Personally engaged in learning; shares the experience; leads by example.
- Experienced working in a small community
- Knowledgeable about major shifts in education
- Open to innovation and new ideas – not sticking to old rigid policies and practices
- A progressive thinker...thinking outside of the box.
- Accountable to the community and student body
- Warm, welcoming and responsive to staff and families.
- A strong leader and able to unite staff in a reasonable but strong way (don’t be a push over)
- Willing to get to know the students personally – not by just looking at marks and attendance.
- Willing to accept what we are currently doing
- Someone with the courage of their convictions
- Supportive of the school’s athletic programs and extra-curricular activities

Other desirable traits submitted:

Approachable (4)	Good sense of humor (4)	Community minded (3)	Organized (3)
Collaborative (2)	Strong leadership skills (2)	Trustworthy (2)	Friendly (2)
Kind (2)	Genuinely like kids/students (2)	Patient (2)	Empathetic (2)
Fair (2)	Looks at both sides of a conflict (2)	Approachable (2)	Understanding (2)
Being 'chill' (2)	Has an anti-bullying stance (2)	Fun (2)	Nice (2)
Open	Good communicator	Flexible	Outgoing
Positive	Strong interpersonal skills	Transparent	Visible
Supportive	Relationship builder	Creative	Vulnerable
Curious	Firm but kind with discipline	Innovative	Risk taker
Adaptive	Know student & families names	Enthusiastic	Professional
Caring	Community based & active	Level headed	Sociable
Good listener	Understands small towns	Forward thinking	Takes action

5. What advice would you offer to the new principal?

This section provides samples of the narratives submitted through the survey. Two major themes arose from the survey – Being engaged in the community and listening/learning from your stakeholders.

Be Engaged in the Community

“The Pincher Creek community is rich in talent, passion, ideas and history – include the entire community in education conversations and opportunities to amplify Matthew Halton’s successes and achievements. They can embrace change and progress, be forward thinking as possible, know best practices and bring best practices for learning in rural communities.”

“Don’t separate the community and the school. They should be wearing the same hat. A principal needs to be visible in the community. The community also has a responsibility to reach out to the school. It’s a two-way street.”

“Embrace this town. It is awesome! Move here, live here, enjoy here, promote here. If you’re going to be here, be here. Participate in the community and the community will accept you. The school and the community are not separate entities; they are one and the same.”

“Take part in as much as you can in the community.”

“Work to embed yourself in the community.”

“Develop a strong and effective practice of engaging the community to secure support for innovation.”

“Actively seek opportunities for local and regional collaboration, and leverage them to expand frontiers of discovery, opportunity and collaboration for students.”

“This is a great community of students and parents who want a visible principal both in the community and at the school.”

“Don’t make hasty decisions – collaboration takes longer but the end results are so much stronger.”

Listen & Learn

“Be open to both the positive and negative feedback you receive as this will really help improve your school community. It’s great to hear the positive feedback which means you are doing some good work in your school community but it is also important to know what people find challenging and don’t like because it will cause you to pause and look at things with the aim of improving. Even one person’s perspective can be the catalyst for improvements.”

“Listen to the students and somehow invite the ideas from the students regarding how school can better prepare them for life.”

“Listen to teachers who are constantly working to make learning in and outside school more relevant to students.”

“Listen carefully for the first year!”

“Ask staff about what has worked in the past before making significant changes.”

“Interview the existing/outgoing principal and stay in touch regarding existing innovative ideas to ensure continuation and growth of those projects.”

“Conduct personal interviews with staff members before starting.”

“Know and trust your staff. We’re a great team and continue to grow stronger every year.”

Other Advice

“A principal is like a parent in a family. Effective ‘parenting’ is being trustworthy, that they are clearly in control while gently guiding the students to be their best.”

“Encourage and promote self-care among staff.”

“Be hands-on and innovative.”

“BE COURAGEOUS.”