



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

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ENTRY PLAN – AUGUST 2017

Introduction

The transition to a new superintendent provides an important opportunity for a school community to collectively assess where we currently are as a school district and where we aspire to be in the future. This opportunity is no less true in a case, such as mine, when the incoming superintendent, while new to the role, is familiar with the district. In fact, during the more than 20 years that I have been privileged to serve the WPS, one of the qualities that I have most appreciated about the WPS is its commitment to continuous improvement and the community's desire to serve all students well while meeting new challenges.

I know a lot about the Westwood Public Schools - its history, its values, its current work. Tempting though it is to dive into the work based on what I believe I know, I recognize how important it is to first "get into the balcony" and look at the organization from a different vantage point. As I begin my work as Superintendent, I plan to spend much of the upcoming year listening, observing, and learning. I have created a plan to systematically gather information, feedback, and data from a wide range of educators and community members. By meeting with individuals and small groups, I will be able to calibrate my own understanding of the district with others' perspectives about the strengths and needs of the district. This process will assist me in identifying those things that the WPS must preserve at all costs as well as our next steps as a district.

Ultimately, the goal of the entry plan is to provide a series of findings about the current state of the district's operations. As a "state of the union" document, the focus will not initially be on making recommendations. Rather, it will provide the foundational understanding necessary to then engage with the district leadership team to articulate a strategy for improvement and prioritizing goals.

Process

I have shaped my entry process around several key activities that include hearing from stakeholders, observing the work of the district, and reviewing available district data.

1) I took advantage of the summer months to meet individually with several key individuals within the community, including such people as the Town Administrator, the Town Finance Director, the Chief of Police, the town's Director of Human Resources, the town's DPW Director, and chair of the Selectmen, among others. My focus in these meetings has been to engage in a two-way exchange about current practices and to consider how the School Department and the Town can work well together. These meetings have been positive and productive. I will continue these meetings with town officials and directors into the fall.

2) During the end of August and throughout the fall, I will be conducting personal interviews with key stakeholders including school committee members, administrators, teachers, Westwood Teachers' Association leadership, support staff, parents, and community members. These interviews will be framed around the questions:

- What are the strengths of the district/school?
- What does the district/school need to work on?
- What do you think the district/school must maintain at all costs?

In addition to these interviews, I will systematically make myself available to meet with small groups by meeting with school PTOs, Site Councils, SEPAC, and other constituent groups. Finally, I will offer “Coffee with the Superintendent” opportunities this fall to meet with staff, parents, and community members who have an interest in sharing their thoughts about the school district and how we can further the work of the district together.

3) From the start of the school year and throughout the fall and winter, I will be visiting classrooms frequently in order to understand our students’ experience as learners and the successes and challenges experienced by our teachers. Assistant Superintendent Allison Borchers, Director of Student Services Abigail Hanscom, Director of Technology Steve Ouellette, and principals will join me in this work. I want to observe firsthand -- in as unobtrusive a way as possible -- the daily work of teaching and learning in our classrooms.

4) As a leadership team, district and building administrators and I will examine documents and data (e.g. assessment results, budget data, alumni survey results, etc.) as part of an on-going effort to understand the needs and operations of the district.

Reporting

I will take the next several months to engage in this entry learning process and will continue to update the School Committee at its monthly meetings about my progress. In late winter/spring 2018, I will publicly report my findings.

Final Thoughts

The feedback gathered throughout this process will help me to lead most effectively. Though I will be systematically reaching out to stakeholders over the next few months, I, of course, will always continue to welcome the input of teachers, staff, parents, School Committee, and community members as we work collaboratively to build on the success of the district and meet the needs of all of our students.

Finally, though I value this entry process, be assured that the district’s work and identified goals will continue to move forward in the meantime. I feel very fortunate to be part of this school community, and I look forward to jumping back in and continuing to work on the exciting initiatives and improvement efforts already underway in the WPS.