

TO: School Committee

FROM: Tim Piwowar, Superintendent

DATE: September 8, 2023

RE: Superintendent's Entry Plan Update

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At the School Committee retreat in July, I shared the outline of my entry plan with the Committee. Now that the school year has begun in earnest, the time is right to share an update on the progress of the plan both with the Committee and the community as a whole.

Conducting an entry plan serves two important purposes. The first is for me to gain a better understanding of the district and its schools, as well as their relationships with students, families, town government, and the broader community. The second is to use the findings of the entry plan to inform the development of the next iteration of our district strategy for improvement, as the current strategy's timeframe expires at the end of the current school year.

In particular, the entry plan is focused on gathering information and perspectives that inform four key questions:

- What are the strengths of our school system?
- What are the biggest challenges that we face?
- What is important that we protect (or maintain) in our system?
- What are our biggest opportunities for growth in the future?

The initial phase of the entry plan began in the spring after my appointment. During that time, I reviewed district documentation (e.g., strategic priorities, assessment data, budget documents, collective bargaining agreements, etc.) and began meeting with members of the district leadership team. I particularly want to thank Emily Parks for being so helpful when I met with her during the spring, and for her work over many years to leave such an amazing system for me to enter.

Since the beginning of the summer, my focus has been on conducting meetings with as many people as possible: district and school staff, municipal officials, elected/appointed members of town boards/committees, and other people in the Westwood community. To date, I have conducted more than fifty individual meetings, and have more scheduled in the coming weeks. In addition, I will be scheduling meetings with student groups, will be spending a full day in each school building to meet with staff, and will be holding four public meet-and-greet forums for families and the broader community. The dates and times of those public family/community forums are listed below:

- Monday, September 18, 8-10am, Muffin House Cafe, 296 Washington St, Westwood

- Tuesday, September 26, 6-8pm, METCO, Inc., 11 Roxbury St, Boston
- Tuesday, October 3, 2-4pm, Westwood Public Library, 660 High St, Westwood
- Wednesday, October 4, 6:30-8:30pm, via Zoom, <https://tinyurl.com/WPSSuptOct4>

While these meetings provide invaluable insight about perceptions of our school system, now that school is back in session, visiting schools and classrooms is imperative to see first-hand what teaching and learning looks like across the district. It is also equally important to spend time talking with and observing students in other environments like lunchrooms and playgrounds to get a sense of the culture of each of our schools and the level to which all of our students feel a sense of belonging in their school communities.

After reviewing all of the information I collect during interviews, observations, and document reviews, I will produce a report of my findings that focuses on answering the four key questions identified above. This report will be initially presented at the November meeting of the School Committee, and its contents will then be shared publicly with the broader community.

From all of my initial impressions, the Westwood Public Schools is an amazing place for students, families, and staff. I am hopeful that the findings from my entry plan will provide an opportunity to not only reflect on our district's successes, but also to support a thoughtful transition so that we can continue to grow in meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of all our students.

I thank the Committee for their support and feedback to date in guiding the creation and execution of the plan, and welcome any additional feedback from you at our upcoming meeting on September 14.