

Superintendent Entry Plan
The Winnetka Public Schools



The Winnetka Public Schools is a community that honors the whole child, fosters creativity, inspires lifelong learning, and develops civic responsibility. District 36 will develop learners who are compassionate citizens, who contribute to their community, and are well prepared for a dynamic future.

-From *The Strategic Plan* (2013)

Proposed by:

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Superintendent of Schools

Winnetka: A Community of Learners

The Superintendent must be able to lead the District into achieving its vision to develop “compassionate citizens.” As the Chief Executive Officer, the Superintendent strives to ensure that every child experiences an excellent, progressive education from the highest caliber staff while responsibly managing the District’s finances and assets. This Entry Plan is designed as a blueprint to fulfill on the mission, vision and values of the District by meeting with key constituents, identifying emerging themes, and developing a plan of action for the future.

Working in The Winnetka Public Schools over the past four years as the Assistant Superintendent has provided the opportunity to immediately build upon the many relationships already established within the community to continue advancing our mission with a constant eye on our values. The critical connections made with students, staff, parents, and community members are valued and will continue to shape our work toward the future. This is a District with rich traditions and a beloved history. As we have built upon the past to form the Winnetka of today, I will continue to work toward shaping our future while honoring our past.

Entry Plan Framework

Purpose:

Although I learned a great deal about the community over the past four years, it is important that I build a plan that will incorporate opportunities for me to gather student, staff, parent, and community feedback as a way of guiding future goal setting and action. It is also important to note that this Plan is transparent with regular review, updates and communication. The goal is to build a strong school and community presence early in my role as the new Superintendent.

Upon being named Superintendent, a Transition Plan was initiated. An entry plan is somewhat different than a Transition Plan. An entry plan belongs to the superintendent and identifies activities for engaging with and learning about the District prior to developing a strategic or action plan. A transition plan, on the other hand, belongs to the full school community and involves the formal and informal preparations for welcoming, on-boarding and supporting a new superintendent in all facets of school life. These plans, albeit with very distinct purposes, should work in

tandem for maximum effectiveness and shared ownership.

Goals of the Entry Plan:

- Gain valuable feedback from stakeholders to serve as a highly informed leader.
- Identify the appropriate goals and work priorities.
- Demonstrate commitment to leading the community by engaging with individuals and groups, listening to feedback, and leading with integrity.
- Assist with the development of a shared vision.

Plan Activities, Timelines & Supports:

Stakeholder Group	Actions	Timelines	Board Support
Community & Community Groups, At-Large	Offer “Meet & Greet” opportunities in spring/summer/fall. Set up meetings with groups including, Volunteer Center, Winnetka Caucus Council – Schools Committee, The Alliance for Early Childhood, Winnetka Northfield Chamber of Commerce, Historical Society, Winnetka Preschools.	April-Nov. 2014	Board President &/or Members
Community, Officials	Set up individual meeting times with key leaders (Village Manager, Police/Fire Chiefs, Park District Director, Library Director,) with the goal of soliciting specific responses to questions that further identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the District and its operations. Share major District goals and initiatives.	July-Dec. 2014	Board Members-- TBD
School Board, Individuals	Set up individual meetings with Board Members to build personal relationships and understand individual expectations.	April-August 2014	All Board Members

School Board	<p>Conduct a Board Retreat with the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview District goals for 2014-2015 • Develop working agreements • Devise a communication plan • Create Board Meeting agenda framework • Commit to implementing plans to connect with staff and partner with the Superintendent • Plan additional formal planning and evaluation time • Build relationships • Craft the Superintendent's goals and evaluation method 	June 7, 2014	All Board Members
	<p>Conduct Board/Superintendent Alignment Meetings with the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a greater understanding of governance vs. management. • Refine working agreements • Build relationships 	Sept., 2014 & Winter, 2015 (as needed)	
Central Office Administrators	<p>Set up individual meetings with the new and returning administrators to understand key issues and tasks, develop strategies and timelines, and understand the norms/values/procedures of each department.</p>	June-August 2014	N/A

Building Administrators	Set up individual meetings with building administrators to understand and collaborate around key issues at the building and District levels.	July-Nov. 2014	N/A
Association (WEA)	Set up meetings with Officers to understand and collaborate around key issues at the building and District levels.	June-Nov. 2014	N/A
Faculty & Other Staff	Set up individual or group meetings with faculty and staff to understand and collaborate around key issues at the building and District levels.	July-June 2014-15	N/A
Faculty & Other Staff	Set up bi-monthly lunch or other meetings to create forums for open dialogue.	Sept.-June 2014-15	Board Members (rotational)
PTOs, Foundation, NSSED, & other District Support Groups	Set up group meetings to understand and collaborate around key issues at the building and District levels.	July-Dec. 2014-15	N/A
Students	Set up meetings with student focus groups to understand and collaborate around key issues at the building and District Levels.	Sept.-June 2014-15	N/A

Developing Work Priorities through Strategic & Other Processes

An effective entry plan necessarily requires deep listening to multiple constituents to collect both formal and informal data prior to goal setting. Interviews will be designed to collect data around common questions. Prior to the onset of this process, interviewees will be identified and questions developed, along with an appropriate method for collecting and organizing different individual's responses to the same questions.

Once the interviews are complete, the following steps will be followed to work toward developing a shared District vision.

- 1) By January 1st, I will present a report to the Board that summarizes this information, including cross-constituent views on the District, our goals, obstacles to achieving them, and actions needed to achieve success. Based on these data, I will also be presenting proposals for system responses to significant issues and how these align with our Strategic Plan.
- 2) Following the initial report, the analysis and proposals will be verified through cross-constituent feedback with key groups to ensure appropriateness and accuracy. They will be revised as necessary before finalization.
- 3) The last step in this process will be the refinement of a strategic vision that represents the values, beliefs and priorities of current stakeholder groups, the School Board, and the superintendent.

It should be noted that an entry plan does not occur in isolation of other school work underway, nor can a new superintendent devote her full time and attention to this Plan. However, the Plan is intended to generate a very high level of support from the full school community, and the resulting action plans will help to refine building and District initiatives that are currently underway.

Formal documentation of this work will occur organically as each step occurs. Documentation will also be transparent, so that all major stakeholders are aware of both the process and significant data shaping decision-making.

Finally, it is important to add that the both the District's vision and its strategic goals are dynamic. We will continue to strive for continuous improvement and refinement. In addition, a healthy organization demonstrates flexibility when unexpected events or phenomena impact its work. We are committed to reviewing the District's vision and strategic goals through an ongoing process of reflection and refinement.

Appendix A: Interview & Debriefing Questions

Community & Officials

Objectives:

- (1) To develop relationships with the broader community and solicit feedback, questions or concerns.
- (2) To develop relationships with community officials and solicit feedback, questions or concerns, along with venues for continued support and cooperation.

Entry activities:

- (1) Conduct formal and informal “meet and greet” opportunities to interact with community members.
- (2) Schedule interviews with community officials to develop relationships, solicit feedback and create stronger connections between the District and community organizations, agency and governmental bodies.

Interview Questions for Officials:

- (1) Please give me a brief biographical sketch to help me know you better.
- (2) How does your organization support District efforts? How can the District support your organization?
- (3) How much interaction have you or do you have with District 36? What is your assessment of the overall District operations? Any relative strengths or weaknesses you’d like to share?
- (4) Describe what you would consider to be a good relationship between your organization and the superintendent. How do you think this could be achieved?
- (5) What is most important to preserve in our schools? What is most important to change?

School Board

Objectives:

- (1) To review the agreed upon ground rules and procedures for meetings and Board/ Superintendent partnership.
- (2) To review and confirm the entry plan approach to arriving at a recommendation for system goals and an action plan.
- (3) To establish norms for communication and conduct.
- (4) To develop and align District goals for the 2014-2015 school year.

Entry activities:

- (1) Conduct one-hour interviews with each Board Member.
- (2) Schedule meetings with the Board President and Vice President to clarify mutual understanding of the role of Board Officers' roles.
- (3) Schedule two Board workshops (one in June and one in September) to:
 - (a) Discuss relevant data to current and on-going District work;
 - (b) Define working relationships between Board Members and the Superintendent;
 - (c) Review and/or establish procedures for the Board to evaluate the performance of the Superintendent; and
 - (d) Develop a calendar of Board meetings with tasks identified and dates established for discussion.

Interview Questions:

- (1) Please give me a brief biographical sketch to help me know you better.
- (2) Why did you seek election to the Board? What do you hope to accomplish as a Board Member?
- (3) What is your sense of how effectively the Board functions?
- (4) What makes you really proud of the District? What concerns you about it?
- (5) What do you see as the most important needs of staff?
- (6) What do you see as the two or three most important school system needs?
- (7) What groups and individuals have major influences on the schools?
- (8) Are the District goals on target? What stands in the way of meeting them?
- (9) What are your expectations of me as superintendent? If the Board and superintendent are truly functioning as partners, what might the Board do to help me meet those expectations? And, what can I do to help the Board function more effectively?
- (10) Do you believe we are a high performing school district or a district that serves high performing kids? And why?
- (11) As a way to move toward common understanding and a shared vision, please define the following terms for our school district:
 - high performing
 - progressive
 - differentiation

Central Office

Objectives:

- (1) To understand key issues and tasks each central office staff person will work on this

year.

- (2) To develop strategies and timelines for accomplishing tasks in each administrative area.
- (3) To establish other norms for communication.
- (4) To understand the norms, values, and procedures that govern the workings of the central office, and, as necessary, make adjustments in the relationship between central office, the superintendent, principals and community.
- (5) To mentor new administrators to the District.

Entry activities:

- (1) Hold Central Office Retreat in June to:
 - (a) Discuss relevant data to current and on-going District work and Strategic Plan;
 - (b) Define working relationships among Central Office team members;
 - (c) Provide team building exercises.
- (2) Conduct combined, two-hour briefing sessions, and individual interviews with central office administrators and other key staff. The interviews will be modified for new administrators to the District.
- (3) Conduct two, half-day meetings in July/ August to discuss the collected interview data from members of the central office, using it to:
 - (a) Define procedures and ground rules for the working relationships between the central office and superintendent, schools and community,
 - (b) Define strategies and timelines for accomplishing system-wide tasks in each central office area.
- (4) Meet bi-monthly with the Central Office team to monitor goals and collaborate on key initiatives.

NB: Interviews and briefings serve two different purposes.

Interviews help me to understand those things that are important to individuals.

Briefings are intended to focus on issues and tasks that are most pressing.

Interview Questions (for returning administrators):

- (1) Please give me a brief biographical sketch to help me know you better.
- (2) What would you most like to accomplish in your position?
- (3) What do you see as the key issues in program, personnel, and school-community relationships?
- (4) What is the current nature of relationships between the superintendent/central office, central office/principals, and central office/community?
- (5) Who are the people and groups active in schools? How do these people influence the

schools?

(6) Are the District's goals on target? What stands in the way of achieving them? How could we overcome the obstacles?

(7) What is the most important thing to preserve in our schools? What is the most important to change?

(8) What has been or is most difficult for you in your position? What brings you the greatest pride?

(9) What changes, if any, in working relationships or job structure do you see as necessary?

(10) Do you believe we are a high performing school district or a district that serves high performing kids? And why?

(11) As a way to move toward common understanding and a shared vision, please define the following terms for our school district:

- high performing
- progressive
- differentiation

(12) What can I do to help you be more effective in your position?

Briefing Questions:

(1) Please describe your job in terms of scope of responsibility?

(2) What are your most pressing short-term tasks?

(3) What are your most pressing long-term tasks?

(4) Please describe recurring tasks in your area.

(5) What special projects are you undertaking?

(6) What tasks must be completed prior to the opening of school?

(7) How can I help?

Building Administrators

Objectives:

(1) To identify key issues at the building level.

(2) To define or re-define relationships between principals and superintendent, central office, and community.

(3) To coordinate work on system-wide tasks.

Entry activities:

(1) Interview each principal for one hour.

(2) Conduct Administrative retreat in early August to discuss the collected interview

data from members of the administrative team, using it to:

- (a) Define expectations, procedures, and ground rules for the relationships between principals and superintendent, central office, and community.
 - (b) Review central office strategies and timelines for accomplishing key, system-wide tasks and identify needed adjustments to take building level issues into account.
 - (c) Coordinate opening of school year activities.
- (3) Hold meetings with individuals as necessary, depending on schedules, to plan for the year's tasks.
 - (4) Spend time in each school (September through December) with each visit scheduled by the principal to maximize my opportunity to observe teaching and talk with teachers and their instruction and students.
 - (5) Host bi-monthly Administrative Team Meetings.

Interview Questions:

- (1) Please give me a brief biographical sketch to help me know you better.
- (2) What are the accomplishments you look upon with pride as a principal?
- (3) What goal would you most like to achieve in your building, and what makes achieving it difficult?
- (4) What is the current nature of relationships between the superintendent/central office, central office/principals, and central office/community?
- (5) Please assess your building in terms of program and personnel.
- (6) What are our system goals? Are they on target? What stands in the way of achieving them? How could we overcome the obstacles?
- (7) Do you believe we are a high performing school district or a district that serves high performing kids? And why?
- (8) As a way to move toward common understanding and a shared vision, please define the following terms for our school district:
 - high performing
 - progressive
 - differentiation
- (9) What individuals or groups influence the system? How is that influence achieved?
- (10) What would you most like to see preserved in your building? In the system?
- (11) What is the thing you would most like to see changed in your building? In the system?
- (12) What responsibilities are the principal's alone? What responsibilities are shared with other principals? With central office?
- (13) Are there areas of decision-making which are unclear?

(14) How can I help you be more effective in your job?

Teacher/Associate Association (WEA)

Objectives:

- (1) Learn about the concerns of the Association.
- (2) Agree upon a format for association/superintendent communications and cooperation.

Entry activities:

- (1) Conduct interviews with executive officers of the WEA.
- (2) Schedule monthly meetings with the WEA.

Interview Questions:

- (1) Please give me a brief biographical sketch to help me know you better.
- (2) What do you see as the most satisfying aspect of teaching in your current position? About teaching in Winnetka? What is most constraining?
- (3) What is your assessment of the overall program of the schools and of the staff of the District?
- (4) What are our District's goals? Are they on target? What stands in the way of achieving them? How can we overcome these obstacles?
- (5) Do you believe we are a high performing school district or a district that serves high performing kids? And why?
- (6) As a way to move toward common understanding and a shared vision, please define the following terms for our school district:
 - high performing
 - progressive
 - differentiation
- (7) What should I know about the history and current nature of the relationship between the Teachers' Association and school administration?
- (8) Describe what you would consider to be a good relationship between the Association and superintendent. How do you think this could be achieved?
- (9) What is most important to preserve in our schools? What is most important to change?
- (10) How can I help forge a strong and productive relationship between the Association and the District?

PTA/O, Foundation & Other Support Group Visits

Objectives:

- (1) Learn about the support measures and concerns of these groups.
- (2) Agree upon a format for group-District communications and cooperation.

Entry activities:

- (1) Conduct interviews with officers of these groups.
- (2) Calendar meetings to attend with each of these groups.

Interview Questions:

- (1) Please give me a brief biographical sketch to help me know you better.
- (2) How does your organization support District efforts? How can the District support the mission of your organization?
- (3) What is your assessment of the overall programs of the District?
- (4) What are our District's goals? Are they on target? What stands in the way of achieving them? How can we overcome these obstacles?
- (5) Describe what you would consider to be a good relationship between your organization and the District, and how can I as the superintendent help? How do you think this could be achieved?
- (6) What is most important to preserve in our schools? What is most important to change?
- (7) What makes you most proud of the Winnetka schools?