



Superintendent Entry Plan

Mid-Year Report

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Superintendent Entry Plan

Mid-Year Report

Overview

I am pleased to present a mid-year report on the findings that have emerged from the over 65 meetings and 200+ hours spent with students, parents, staff, administration, community members, and School Board members. During the time we spent together, I listened carefully to our stakeholders and collected both formal and informal data surrounding common questions, which were asked to each constituent group. These key questions were identified in the Superintendent Entry Plan and developed to capture cross-constituent views on the District, our goals, and obstacles to achieving them. I am appreciative of the willingness of all those I met with to carefully consider and discuss both the past and future direction of our District. It is through these discussions that I was able to hear opportunities and obstacles; identify immediate and longer-term priorities; and consider, big dreams. The results from what I learned have been separated into the three sections shown below: Cross-Constituent Views, Ambitious Opportunities, and Developing a Shared Vision. Finally, next steps and timeline for completion are noted.



Student Focus Group

CROSS-CONSTITUENT VIEWS

Information collected from the entry plan visits was coded to identify themes and patterns. Themes considered “consistent” were ones that emerged from at least three constituent groups. Once identified, these themes were organized into the following categories: our students, our staff, teaching and learning, leadership and governance, and the learning environment.

What was learned about...

Our Students

- Students genuinely enjoy coming to school and learning, especially in the younger grades (K-4).
- Student success means more than just high test scores. Students are driven to develop leadership traits, empathy, collaborative skills, etc. Students' social-emotional needs are met and developed throughout the K-8 experience.
- Students need to demonstrate growth--academically, socially, and emotionally. There is a desire to identify mechanisms for ensuring and verifying (via evidence) that all students along the continuum are growing (struggling learners ↔ high-readiness learners).
- Students participate in a number of standardized assessments, such as PARCC, ISAT, and STAR. There is concern about the volume, focus, and time dedicated to standardized assessments. It is important to note all student focus groups mentioned concerns about assessment.

Our Staff

- Teachers are highly regarded and noted for deeply knowing individual students. A sixth grader noted, "If you don't get it, [teachers] have other ways (for me) to learn."
- Staffing and student enrollment alignment requires regular review to ensure students' needs are being met. Review is also necessary to ensure staff members have opportunities to plan, collaborate, and communicate with others.
- Teachers articulate feeling stress related to managing the implementation of new (and continuation of ongoing) initiatives, changes in curriculum, and local and national assessments.

Teaching and Learning

- Experiential learning units and events (ex. Monarch Migration, Pioneer Day, Immigration Day, etc.) are recognized as effective components of the

curriculum. A desire to infuse more interdisciplinary experiences in the middle schools was expressed.

- The Arts and Related Studies (Art, Music, KW) are deemed to be highly important components to the curriculum. There is discussion that the curricular focus on math and English language arts is detracting from the need to focus on civics/social studies and science.
- Integrating technology in the classroom is shifting in practice and becoming more integrated. The emphasis on ensuring that technology is utilized as a tool, as a means to learn, must continue.
- There is a desire to increase the length of the kindergarten day.

Leadership & Governance

- There is a desire to have greater depth and focus on fewer District goals. A focus on less will allow us to do more.
- An inclusive process that will result in the creation of a shared vision for the District's future is needed.
- There is optimism about the future of the District. This outlook is accompanied by a desire to balance a 21st Century future while honoring the District's strong progressive traditions.
- A desire exists to have more two-way communication and dialogue between Board members and the community. This includes opportunities for the Board members to interact with community members, parents, and staff around key issues and initiatives.
- The community values the Winnetka Public Schools District 36. Our schools are a source of pride. Parents are invested in the schools and interested in partnering for continuous improvement.

The Learning Environment

- A welcoming, caring, warm school environment is recognized and valued.
- Small class sizes are valued.
- Climate control in the schools is a concern, with a focus on regulating temperatures to optimize learning. Air-conditioning was most frequently noted, however, heat control was also mentioned multiple times.

AMBITIOUS OPPORTUNITIES

As I listened to our community and asked for feedback, priorities, and big ideas, I began sorting and interpreting the information to create prioritized concepts. Following the Board's review, these concepts will be presented again to constituent groups for refinement (January–March). The next step will be to convert the concepts into articulated goals with accompanying action plans. A presentation to the Board in May 2015 will include refining the existing Strategic Plan by utilizing these new goals to replace and/or modify those goals remaining to be complete.

Personalized Learning for All

Student - Growth Model

Build a student growth measurement model that aligns with our values and learning expectations to ensure the shared vision is being met. Verify with evidence that *every* student is developing academically, socially, and emotionally.

Program - Special Education

Desire to analyze our current programming and service delivery model to ensure we are doing our best to meet the needs of students and comply with their entitled services, while building student independence.

Staff - Professional Development System

Desire to design an innovative staff development system that aligns with District initiatives, provides differentiated support, and embeds application to improve student learning. This includes a review of the induction and mentoring program for new staff. A redesign on this system is underway with the development of the Winnetka University, an outgrowth of the negotiations process.

Student Programmatic Enhancements

Kindergarten

Desire to research the options for extended day or full-day kindergarten program for the community. Research would need to include program design options, curriculum, student benefits, logistics, and costs.

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math)

Desire to incorporate more integrated opportunities for application of the goals. An analysis of technology and curriculum strategic goals will be conducted to determine the best avenues for embedding STEAM learning in our schools.

21st Century Experiential Learning

Desire to design more experiential learning opportunities for students focused on developing a 21st century global citizen, with an emphasis at grades 5-8. There is a desired target on innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration with the outside world.

Facilities

Environmental Design

Desire to ensure that our facilities support current and future needs for educating students, including climate control, green (energy efficient) design, and flexible learning spaces.

DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

A shared vision should be inspirational, long-term, and challenging to achieve. Ideally the vision should establish a standard of excellence and serve as a road map to help take our District to the next level, transcending the status quo.

Based on the conversations about what to preserve and dreams that we have for our schools, it is apparent that certain elements should be included in our vision. These key elements are:

EVERY STUDENT

GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT

NEEDS

K-8 EXPERIENCE

COMMUNITY

Rather than drafting a statement that includes these key terms at this point, I will be re-engaging the groups to clearly define these terms. What do we mean by Every Student? Growth & Achievement? Needs? K-8 Experience? Community? The statement itself is much less important than the message it conveys. We need to fully understand our message, the ambition behind it, and be prepared to hold ourselves up to the standard. We also need to define these key words so we are able to measure our progress towards our shared vision.

The first set of meetings I held were focused on the substance of our work. The next round of meetings will emphasize the process for determining the key elements of our vision.

NEXT STEPS

January 27	Gain School Board support for priorities and process
February–March	Meet with constituents group again to report on priorities and define our vision terms
March–April	Convert prioritized concepts into goals and action plans
May 19	Present modified strategic plan and shared vision draft to the Board
June	Communicate shared vision to wide audiences and initiate action plans scheduled to begin in 2015