

# SUPERINTENDENT ENTRY PLAN

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MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT





## SUPERINTENDENT ENTRY PLAN

Dear Madison Community,

It is a tremendous honor to lead the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and to commit myself to the Board of Education's charge – to ensure that every school is a **thriving school** that prepares **every student** for college and career. In Madison, there is a stark and stubborn racial and socio-economic achievement gap that must be addressed directly, with determination and tenacity, if we are to achieve this over-arching common goal.

During the search process, I heard from everyone with whom I talked—students, parents, community leaders, teachers, principals, central office administrators, and board members—that they are ready to embrace change and work together to ensure that the school district meets the needs of every child. MMSD meets the needs of many students, and there have been some positive efforts and progress made, but the district isn't yet positively changing the academic outcomes and life chances of every student.



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*“Thriving Schools that Prepare Every Student for College, Career, and Life”*

In an effort to ensure that we build on the strengths of the district and identify the most powerful strategies for addressing its challenges, I will be using a structured entry plan to guide my work during the first 90 days after my official start date. That plan is described in detail in the following pages. It is critical that we learn as much as possible as quickly as possible about what is and isn't working in the school district. Otherwise, we will have failed before we even get started, and failure is not an option.

I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Jen

## Core Beliefs

Before I describe the process, I want to share some of my core beliefs. These beliefs have influenced the design of my entry process.

## Commitment to Equity

If children are to enjoy all that life has to offer, they must receive a high-quality education that builds on their strengths, addresses their needs, and prepares them for college and career. To do this, we must continually identify and remove the institutional barriers that prevent students from being successful.

## A Focus on Teaching, Learning and Leadership

If we are to provide a high-quality education for all students, we've got to focus on continuously improving the quality of teaching and leadership in every school. Good teaching matters, and good teaching doesn't happen consistently without the ongoing support of a strong principal at the helm.

## Systemic Improvement

The responsibility for improving student learning can't fall on the shoulders of teachers and principals alone. District, school and classroom actions must be systemic in nature; that is, we've got to align all components of the system to support high-quality teaching and learning. I believe that the central office's job is to make sure that our schools have everything they need to serve students well. That means being both *proactive*-- providing school-level educators with what they need without their having to ask for it-- and being *responsive* to the unique needs of each school and issues as they arise.

## Continuous Improvement based on Data and Focused on Results

I also know that it takes time and continuous reflection and refinement to make meaningful change. This means working hard to identify the school and district practices that are already getting results, honing the practices that we think will produce results, and applying the research that tells us what high-performing schools and districts are doing to accelerate student learning and close the achievement gap. I don't believe in throwing out practices that are working or starting from scratch, but I do believe that we should invest our limited resources in practices that work.

## Collaboration

Ultimately, none of this will work if we don't work collaboratively toward a common goal, engaging different viewpoints and identifying multiple pathways to success. I believe that a good leader listens for understanding, carefully weighs multiple perspectives, and then takes assertive action.



## Goals for the Entry Process

The entry period is designed to reach the following goals:

1. Build a positive working relationship with the Board of Education that is anchored in a set of common goals and priorities aimed at accelerating student growth and eliminating achievement gaps
2. Develop shared understanding of the district's strengths and challenges
3. Build trust and gain commitment from school and community members to address the district's challenges
4. Identify a set of strategic actions with aligned resources for the 2013-14 school year
5. Establish a management structure, set of management processes and practices, and a district culture that truly supports teachers and students in the classroom

## Phases

The entry plan consists of three phases:

### **Phase 1: Transitioning - March**

During this phase, I will be making regular visits to Madison before my official start date in an effort to ensure a smooth transition. I will meet with board members, key elected officials and community leaders, Interim Superintendent Jane Belmore and key district staff to learn more about the district and ensure that all stakeholders have been identified for the listening and learning phase.

### **Phase 2: Listening and Learning - April/May**

During this phase, which will begin on my official start date, I will be meeting with a variety of stakeholders to discuss the district's goals and better understand the district's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. This phase is critical in that it will be the time period in which I hear broadly from students, teachers, staff, principals, parents, community members and others. My goal is to attain a deep and rich understanding through an analysis of multiple perspectives. Additionally, I will be analyzing a variety of school and district data to better understand the current state.

### **Phase 3: Planning - May/June**

During this phase, I will use the data I collected during the listening and learning phase to finalize goals with the board and determine the district's strategic priorities and actions. In order to finalize the plan moving forward, I will convene a smaller guiding coalition of key school and district leaders to identify the strategic actions that we must take to reach the district's goals as well as the management routines for ensuring effective implementation.



## Details of Process

### Phase 1 - Transitioning:

Key activities:

- One-on-one meetings with Board members
- One-on-one meetings with key elected officials and community leaders
- Analysis of a variety of data, including student achievement data and financial data
- Work with Interim Superintendent to make major decisions and fill critical positions, as needed

### Phase 2 - Listening and Learning:

- One-on-one meetings with all direct reports to review priorities, progress to date, and effectiveness
- One-on-one meetings with Committee chairs
- Meetings with each central office team to review priorities, progress to date, and effectiveness
  - Key topics will include, but not be limited to:
    - Curriculum, instruction, assessment and intervention
    - Professional learning
    - Leadership development
    - Performance management/data use
    - Talent management
    - Technology
    - Strategic planning and budgeting
    - Special Education
    - English Learner programs
- Meet with key constituent groups to discuss strengths, challenges and opportunities in the district:
  - Principals- principal meetings (elementary, middle, high school)
  - Teachers and staff- focus groups (elementary, middle, high school)
  - Parents- parent forums (by high school area); parent organizations
  - Students- meet with student leadership groups; focus groups
  - General Community- community forums (by high school area)
  - Community organizations
  - Union leaders
  - Faith leaders
  - Business leaders
  - University partners
  - Local media
  - Elected officials
- Working session Board to review results of Listening and Learning phase
- Board retreat to discuss goals and priorities, roles and responsibilities, communications protocols, and constituent services



## Details of Process (continued)

### **Phase 3 - Planning:**

- Convene guiding coalition, which will include school and central office representatives, to make sense of data collected in Phase 2 and to determine strategic plan for the district moving forward
- Align organizational structure to strategic priorities
- Develop a process and timeline for discussing progress on strategic plan
- Establish new meeting structure and central office and principal management practices
- Hold a retreat with management team to review the plan and prepare for implementation

## Conclusion

I'd like to thank everyone in advance for their patience during this entry phase. Please keep in mind that this is a living document that will be adjusted as needed based on feedback and new learning. It is critical that we take time to reflect on progress to date and identify the best possible way forward before we act. Our students are depending on it! I look forward to seeing you soon!

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