



ENTRY PLAN

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LISTENING
LEARNING
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Introduction

I am humbled and honored to serve as the Interim Superintendent for the Weston Public School District. I am committed to building positive relationships within the district and community and ensuring a smooth transition to the Superintendency role. As I begin my new role, it is an excellent opportunity for me to examine where we are as a district while



simultaneously planning for the future of the school community. I have already learned that the families are passionate about educating the whole child and are deeply committed and engaged; the students are eager and involved; the staff and administration demonstrate a growth mindset and are extremely talented; and the school committee and town provide the resources and support necessary to continue the work of the educational system.

As I begin my tenure as Interim Superintendent, I plan to spend this year listening and learning about the district from families, students, staff, administration, and community members. To accomplish this, I have developed an entry plan outlining key activities I will undertake over the next several months. I look forward to embarking on this important journey with you and know that together we will work to ensure that every student continues to receive high-quality, enriching opportunities to learn.

Yours in Education,

Dr. Karen Zaleski

Purpose

Jentz and Wofford (2012) emphasize, “We cannot make changes that last without an intimate knowledge of the setting, including how the people in the setting construe it, nor without gaining that knowledge in a way that produces trust” (p.17).

The purpose of this entry plan is to listen and learn and gather information about the strengths and opportunities for growth in the district with input from multiple stakeholders and conduct a review of data and documents, resulting in the development of a report that highlights impressions and findings based on key themes identified. The final written report will summarize what I learned about the district, organized by themes and patterns. It will consist of an analysis of the district’s strengths and opportunities for growth. Report findings will inform the district’s strategic plan.

Process

The entry plan process will include school visits, individual, focus group, and community meetings with key stakeholders, data analysis, and document reviews. The process has three phases; each entry phase supports authentic engagement, listening, learning, and leading. The following outlines key aspects of the plan:

Phase 1: Involves meetings with multiple internal and external stakeholders individually and in groups to collect qualitative data using semi-structured interview questions to learn about Weston from various perspectives. The selection process for individual versus group interviews is a random strategy I use to ensure the engagement of many stakeholders within the entry timeframe outlined below. Interviews conducted are confidential, meaning emerging themes outlined in the findings report will not identify specific individuals. Phase 1 also entails a review of documents to learn about priorities, policies, procedures, initiatives, and student performance.

Questions are individualized for each stakeholder group. Additionally, to further aid me in listening and learning about the district, the following guiding questions are developed for everyone:

Guiding Questions

What are the strengths of the district?

What are the opportunities for growth in the district?

How would you describe the culture of the district?

What communication method (s) work well?

What do you think needs to be preserved? Why?

What are you hoping for from me?

Process

Phase 2: A thorough analysis of phase one data and sharing findings. During this phase, key emerging themes and findings are identified. The District's Administrative Council group will give initial feedback on the themes and findings. Sharing initial results with administrators provides an opportunity to collectively reflect and understand the impact and effect of the results on all stakeholders and the implications for district-wide strategic planning. From there, a draft report of entry findings will be finalized and presented to the school committee for public discussion.

Phase 3: Involves collaboratively examining the district's existing strategic plan and developing any necessary revisions. The strategic plan will be reviewed and revised with input from key stakeholder groups before final decision-making. Strategic planning offers short- and long-term planning opportunities and provides a platform for PreK-12 alignment of improvement plans.



Goals

The following goals support the work of the entry plan and align with the standards outlined in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Superintendent rubric:

1. Supporting All Students: Assess and build upon the district’s strengths and opportunities for growth to ensure all students receive a rigorous learning experience and the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support and resources necessary to thrive as learners and members of their communities (in school and at home).

2. Organizational Capacity: Assess organizational efficiency, including human, fiscal, capital, and instructional resources, to ensure students are educated in an efficient, supportive, safe, and rigorous environment.

3. Engagement: Create opportunities to connect and “listen and learn” with internal and external stakeholders to develop positive relationships and a comprehensive understanding of Weston.

4. Communication: Build trust through consistent, transparent, respectful communication and visibility in the district and community.

5. Culture: Promote a positive, collaborative, inclusive, and productive climate of high expectations that is student-centered and aligned with the district’s vision, mission, and core values.

Key Activities/ Timelines

The following key activities align with the entry plan's goals and support the work's implementation.

Pre-Entry and Preparation (April–June 2023)

Before my official start date of July 1, 2023, I engaged in the following transition activities:

- Meetings with the outgoing superintendent.
- Meetings with school and district administration.
- Meetings with PreK-12 staff.
- Interviews with students.
- Individual meetings with the School Committee.
- Meetings with PTO and METCO parents.
- Attended Woodland Elementary Principal search debriefing.
- Attended the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendent Conference.
- Review of community survey results conducted during the Superintendent search.
- Review of DESE district-wide data.
- Review of school committee meetings.
- Review of the 2023-2026 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Weston School Committee and the Weston Educators Association (WEA).

Phase 1: Entry (July–October 2023)

The below list of activities is not exhaustive:

Goal 1: Supporting All Students: Assess and build upon the district's strengths and opportunities for growth to ensure all students receive a rigorous learning experience and the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support and resources necessary to ensure that all students thrive as learners and members of their communities (in school and at home).

- Meetings with students.
- Meetings with parents/guardians (PTO, SEPAC, METCO).
- Meetings with staff (teachers, team leads, union leaders, and other identified staff).

Key Activities/ Timelines

- Meetings with district and school administration (Central office, Admin Council) to listen, learn, and focus on teaching, learning, successes, and growth areas.
- Review curriculum, instruction, assessment, and related programs with the curriculum specialists, department heads, and other relevant staff.
- Meetings with district and school administration to learn about action taken based on strategic initiatives, Metrowest survey and any other survey data to support students' social-emotional learning and behavioral support.
- School visits/meetings with principals to observe teaching and learning and discuss successes and opportunities for growth.
- Review school improvement plan goals and actions.
- Review district strategic plan.
- Participate in goal setting and retreats with the School Committee.
- Meetings with town government (Administrator, Finance Committee, and Department Heads).
- Meetings with community partners (police, fire, and other identified organizations).

Goal 2: Organizational Capacity: Assess organizational efficiency, including human, fiscal, capital, and instructional resources, to ensure students are educated in an efficient, supportive, safe, and rigorous environment.

- Meetings with School Committee to set goals, examine policies, and budget.
- School visits/meetings with principals to review staffing, budget, instructional and other resources, building-based operations, and needs.
- Meetings with principals and district leaders to assess/understand organizational efficiency.
- Review educator and staff evaluation processes and outcomes.
Interviews with district and school administration. Discuss successes and opportunities for growth.
- Meetings and interviews with the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations to analyze instructional resources, develop a comprehensive operational budget, and examine capital improvements and projects.
- Administrative retreat focused on district vision and strategic plan.
- Hire staff in vacant positions.

Key Activities/ Timelines

Goal 3: Engagement: Create opportunities to connect, listen and learn with many internal and external stakeholders to develop positive relationships and a comprehensive understanding of Weston.

- School Committee Members
- District Administrators
- Building Administrators
- Faculty (teachers, team leads, coordinators, department heads, union leaders, and other identified staff)
- Staff (Maintenance, custodial, transportation, food services, and administrative)
- Students
- Town Government (Administrator, Finance Committee, and Department Heads)
- Community Partners (Police and Fire, Faith-based, and other identified organizations)
- Parents/Guardians (PTO, SEPAC, METCO)
- Enroll and participate in the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP)

Goal 4: Communication: Build trust through consistent, transparent, respectful communication and visibility in the district and community.

- Establish a communication protocol with the School Committee.
- Attend School Committee Meetings.
- Attend key school and community events.
- Meet with building and district administration.
- Attend existing meetings (Admin Council, Central Office, School Council).
- Visit schools and engage in formal and informal meetings and conversations with teachers, students, and staff.
- Identify community organizations and partners and reach out and make connections.
- Attend various parent meetings (PTO/SEPAC/METCO) and engage with parents ongoing.
- Provide clear, positive, factual, and transparent communication via email, public meetings, websites, and other means.

Key Activities/ Timelines

Goal 5. Culture: Promote a positive, collaborative, inclusive, and productive climate of high expectations that is student-centered and aligned with the district’s vision, mission, and core values.

- Meet with METCO Director/parents/students.
- Hire DEI Coordinator and meet with the DEI Committee.
- Review Equity Audit/outcomes.
- District-wide strategic planning to support the work of DEI.
- Model positive and productive leadership in all communications and aspects of the work.
- Acknowledge the hard work of staff, students, administrators, parents, school committee, and community members and provide individual feedback, authentic praise, partnership, and ongoing support.
- Showcase building and district successes in the district and at school committee meetings.
- Visit schools and participate in informal and formal meetings to build relationships with principals, teachers, students, and staff.
- Hold Superintendent meetings off or on-site.
- Attend events and provide resources and support to ensure positive outcomes.
- Explore mechanisms to enhance and maintain productive relationships between the school committee, district/school administration, and staff.

Entry Document Review

The below list is not exhaustive and captures a review of documents as part of the entry process.

- District policies/procedures
- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- School and District Improvement Plans
- Employee Handbook/Contracts
- Tiered Focus Monitoring Review
- Emergency Management Plans
- DESE data (school and student data including MCAS, discipline, and reports on demographics)
- Budget and grant documents.
- Metrowest and any other survey data
- Equity Audit
- Legal Documents

Key Activities/ Timelines

Phase 2: Analysis and Findings (November 2023–February 2024)

- Analyze qualitative and quantitative data.
- Identify emerging themes.
- Meet with Administrators Council to review key themes, collectively reflect, and understand the impact and effect of the findings on all stakeholders and the implications for district-wide strategic planning.
- Develop a findings report.
- Share the report publicly with the School Committee.

Phase 3: Strategic Planning (March–June 2024)

- Examine the entry findings and the district’s current strategic plan.
- Work with Admin Council to elicit feedback on entry findings and the district’s current strategic plan.
- Identify key stakeholders to inform the work of a revised strategic plan.
- Establish measurable district goals and actions.
- Present the plan to the school committee for approval by June 30, 2024.
- Principals prepare to connect the plan to their individual School Improvement Plans.
- Educators connect their individual goals to their respective School Improvement Plans.



Reference

Jentz, B. with Wofford, J. (2012). *The Entryplan Approach. How to Begin a Leadership Position Successfully. Education edition.* Newton, MA: Leadership and Learning, Inc.