

Superintendent Entry Plan Scarsdale Public Schools



Non Sibi: Achieving Success as a Team

Proposed by:

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Non Sibi: Achieving Success as a Team

As I enter into the District as its next instructional leader, it is important to respect traditions, history, and values. As past generations have built today's Scarsdale, so does this generation recognize its responsibility to the future. Scarsdale schools have and continue to seek to develop young people to their fullest, to help them to become self-reliant, lifelong learners, who can reach beyond themselves. The stories are as individual as the children, but a clear common thread is teaching of unusual quality and a community united in dedication to learning.

The schools aim to provide an intellectually powerful and humane education. They share a commitment to active and challenging learning. Recent years have seen a growing emphasis on common standards, assessments and curriculum. However, the District's greatest strengths are still individual students and teachers, the quality of the encounter between them, and the strong sense of mission shared between school and home.

The formal Mission of the Scarsdale Public Schools is to sponsor each student's full development, enabling our youth to be effective and independent contributors in a democratic society and an interdependent world. To this end, we endeavor to help them to think and express themselves clearly, critically and creatively; to understand themselves and others within the broad fabric of human experience and the natural universe; to appreciate their rights and responsibilities as citizens; and to become people of integrity, maturity, and generous spirit. A measure of our success is the degree to which they fulfill their potential for the common good, non sibi--not for themselves alone. Valuing our individuality, we unite to keep the flame of learning.

Embedded in the work is the notion that families, other social institutions, and the community as a whole, as well as the schools and each student, share responsibility for achieving the Mission. We believe success is most likely when all dedicate their fullest individual energies to this enterprise, understanding one another, communicating well, assuming best intentions, and working in a cooperative spirit.

It is important to note that the superintendent will perform the duties and responsibilities associated with leading and operating this complex and multidimensional District while adhering to the Mission. This plan is designed as a blueprint to fulfill on this work, while meeting with key constituents, identify emerging themes, and developing a plan of action.

Entry Plan Framework

Purpose

Although I have been a superintendent for many years in several districts across the country, Scarsdale is a unique community, and I need time and an appropriate framework to understand its full complexity. This plan will incorporate opportunities for me to gather student, staff, parent, and community information as a way of guiding future goal setting and action. It is also important to note that this plan is intended to be highly transparent and somewhat organic with regular reviews and updates. Some of the goals inherent in this work are to build a strong school and community presence early in my role as the new Superintendent and to inspire trust and confidence.

It should be noted that an *Entry Plan* is somewhat different than a *Transition Plan*. An Entry Plan is for the superintendent and identifies activities for engaging with and learning about the District prior to developing a strategic or other 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 goal and work priorities.
- Demonstrate the superintendents' commitment to leading the community by engaging with individuals and groups, listening to feedback, and leading with integrity.

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, League of Women Voters, the Forum, and neighborhood associations. Edgemont Family Counseling.	April-Nov. 2014	Board President &/or Members

Community, Officials	Set up individual/group meeting times with key Community leaders (Village Manager, Police/Fire Chiefs, Public Works Directors, 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.	July-Dec. 2014	Board Members-- TBD
School Board, Individuals	Set up individual meetings with Board Members to build personal relationships and understand individual and collective expectations.	April-August 2014	All Board Members
School Board, Full Board	<p>Conduct a Board Retreat with the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop working agreements; • Devise a communication plan; • Craft the Superintendent's goals and evaluation method; • 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; and • Build relationships. <p>Conduct Board Development Mtgs. with the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a greater understanding of governance vs. management; • Refine working agreements; and • Build relationships. 	<p>July, 2014</p> <p>Sept., 2014/ Winter, 2015 (as needed)</p>	All Board Members

Central Office, Administrators	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.	April-August 2014	N/A
Buildings, Administrators	Set up individual meetings with building administrators to understand key issues at the building and District levels.	July-Nov. 2014	N/A
Association	Set up meetings with Officers and site reps to understand key issues at the building and District levels.	July-Nov. 2014	N/A
Faculty & Other Staff	Set up individual or group meetings with faculty and staff to understand key issues at the building and District levels.	Sept.-June 2014-15	N/A
	Set up monthly lunch or other meetings to create forums for open dialogue.	Sept.-June 2014-15	N/A
PTA, Maroon and White, Foundation & other District Support Groups	Set up group meetings to understand key issues at the building and District levels.	July-Dec. 2014-15	N/A
Students	Set up group meetings middle and high school governance groups to understand 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. Towards that end, interviews will be designed around common questions for all stakeholders. Prior to onset of this process, interviewees and

questions will be developed, along with an appropriate method for collecting and organizing different individual's responses.

Once interviews are complete, the data will be analyzed and shared collectively. By January, I will present a written report to the Board that summarizes this information, including cross-constituent views on the District, current goals (or perceptions thereof), obstacles to achieving them, and actions needed to achieve success. Based on this data, I will also be presenting a series of proposals for system responses to significant issues.

Following this, 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.

The last step in this process will be the development of a strategic vision that represents the values, beliefs and priorities of stakeholder groups, the Board of Education, and the superintendent.

It should be noted that an Entry Plan does not occur in isolation and can be in direct competition with other necessary school work. It should not be expected that a new superintendent devote his full time and attention to this Plan. Instead, the Plan is intended to supplement other work and generate a very high level of support from the full school community.

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 processes and any significant data shaping decision-making.

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 the 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 Scarsdale? What is your assessment of 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 cooperation.
- (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 and the two out-going Board

Members.

- (2) Schedule meetings with the Board President and Vice President to clarify mutual understanding of the role of Board Officers.
- (3) Schedule two Board workshops (one in July 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) Please give me your own assessment of the school's instructional program.
- (4) How do you assess the effectiveness of school personnel?
- (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 to be addressed by the Board? By staff?
- (7) What groups and individuals have major influences on the schools?
- (8) What are our system goals? Are they on target? What stands in the way of meeting them?
- (9) What are your expectations of me as superintendent?
- (10) What else do I need to know about you or the District that I didn't ask?

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, and, as necessary, make adjustments in the relationship between central office and the superintendent, principals and community.

Entry activities:

- (1) Conduct combined, two-hour briefing sessions, and individual interviews with central office administrators and other key staff.
- (2) Conduct two, half-day meetings in late July/early 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.

Note Bene: 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 for various groups.

Interview Questions:

- (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) What are our system goals? Are they 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 public schools? What is the most important to change?
- (8) What has been or is most difficult for you in your position?
- (9) What changes, if any, in working relationships or job structure do you see as necessary?

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?

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 two, half-day meetings in late July/early August to discuss the collected interview data from members of the central office, 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 a day 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 students.

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) What individuals or groups influence the system? How is that influence achieved?
- (8) What would you most like to see preserved in your building? In the system?
- (9) What is the thing you would most like to see changed in your building? In the system?
- (10) What responsibilities are the principal's alone? What responsibilities are shared with other principals?
- (11) Are there areas of decision-making which are unclear?

Teachers' Association

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 officers of Teachers' Association.

- (2) Conduct an Association Data Review meeting with the officers of the Association to review data collected from interviews and seek agreement with respect to superintendent-Association cooperation.
- (3) Schedule regular meetings with the Association.

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 Scarsdale? 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) What should I know about the history and current nature of the relationship between the Teacher's Association and school administration?
- (6) Describe what you would consider to be a good relationship between the Association and superintendent. How do you think this could be achieved?
- (7) What is the most important to preserve in our schools? What is most important to change?

PTA, 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 superintendent. How do you think this could be achieved?
- (6) What is most important to preserve in our schools? What is most important to change?