



Superintendent's Entry Plan

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INTRODUCTION

If, as Plato observed, “the beginning is the most important part of the work,” then in order to effectively lead the Fayette County Public Schools, I must be systematic and systemic about my entry into the school district and community.

Toward that end, I have spent time reflecting upon and crafting a very deliberate entry plan for the first 100 school days of my tenure as superintendent of the Fayette County Public Schools. Much of this plan is focused on listening to and learning from the many diverse constituencies in Fayette County in order to build and strengthen the relationships necessary for student success. In essence, I hope to “hit the ground learning.”

In order to fulfill our community mandate to eliminate achievement disparities while raising achievement for all students, it is imperative that the school district continue the initiatives that are working and refocus our efforts in other areas. Building on the strong work to date, we must accelerate our sense of urgency about raising expectations for all students, boosting achievement levels across the board, and recruiting a highly-qualified, diverse workforce.

This formal entry plan will provide me with the time and opportunity to gather critical information quickly about the needs of children, staff, the school system and community. During this process, I will complete a comprehensive review of existing programs, initiatives, services, student performance and fiscal conditions in order to assess the district's strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement, identify critical issues and correct weaknesses while honoring the work already in place. It is important to note that the work of entry occurs simultaneously with the operation of the school district.

Through direct conversation, group discussion, observation, surveys and document reviews, I will immerse myself in learning about the Fayette County Public Schools and accelerate my learning curve in order to effectively lead the school district. This effort will also help me make the connections necessary to establish a presence in the community and begin building the

critical relationships and networks that will help us continue the advancements our students deserve.

This document outlines the goals, objectives, major activities and timetable for my transition to the role of Fayette County schools superintendent. It is a living document, open to revision. As you read it, please consider ways it can be improved and share those with me. Special consideration has been given to include a diversity of stakeholders in this plan and voices that may not be heard through traditional forms of communication. Please note that the goals and activities are not listed in order of importance or chronology.

TIMETABLE

The entry plan has three phases:

- Phase I: Pre-Entry (prior to first day of work)
June 11, 2011 – August 31, 2011
- Phase II: Entry (first 100 school days)
September 1, 2011 – February 13, 2012
- Phase III: Development of Next Steps
February 2012 – May 2012

Listening and learning sessions with individuals, small groups, and larger gatherings will dominate Phase I and Phase II. These sessions will consist of numerous meetings with board members, internal leadership groups, direct reports, principals, staff, employee groups, students, parent groups, community organizations, community members, business partners and faith leaders.

Updates and reports about the progress of the entry plan will be provided to the Board of Education and the community, as appropriate.

GOALS

1. Maintain district focus on students and accelerate existing momentum to eliminate achievement gaps.

2. Build strong, collaborative and trusting relationships with key stakeholders, including students, staff, families, community supporters, business partners, faith leaders, elected officials and media representatives and establish two-way communication channels.
3. Ensure a smooth and orderly transition of leadership.
4. Develop a structure for the Superintendent to listen broadly and learn comprehensively about the Fayette County Public Schools in order to develop a deeper working knowledge and understanding of the school district, its culture, traditions, history and expectations.
5. Provide avenues for diverse perspectives and voices to be heard and engage all segments of our community in authentic communication that builds mutual trust and understanding.
6. Establish an effective and collegial working relationship with the members of the Fayette County Board of Education and solidify a cohesive board-superintendent leadership team focused on improving the achievement levels of all students.
7. Purposely and carefully structure the transition to best support and create instructional improvement and increases in student achievement.
8. Review organizational structure, climate, budget, key work processes, practices, programs and resources to ensure alignment of resources to efficiently and effectively meet the educational, social and emotional needs of all students.
9. Assess the strengths, needs, improvement opportunities and challenges of the Fayette County Public Schools.
10. Recognize the service and accomplishments of students, staff, community leaders and leaders and publicly celebrate attainments of benchmarks and goals.

KEY VALUES

- All decisions and actions must be based on what's best for students.
- Every child deserves an excellent and equitable education.
- Everything rises and falls on leadership.
- Individual differences are to be respected and celebrated.

- Interactions must be conducted with truth, transparency and collaboration.

CORE COMPONENTS

Throughout my tenure in Fayette County, I will actively engage in a purposeful effort to listen to the community, learn, discern and develop action plans for the future, in collaboration with all stakeholders. The following activities will be core components of my entry plan. Please note that completion of these activities will occur simultaneously and are of equal importance.

- Cultivation of a strong working relationship with the Fayette County Board of Education.
- Meetings, interviews, community forums and school visits designed to build collaborative and trusting relationships with key stakeholders while gathering their insights on the school district.
- Regular interaction with the public and news media through existing communication channels while exploring new ways of sharing information and receiving feedback.
- Data analysis, information gathering and document review.

STRUCTURE

Phase I: Pre-entry

During the months of July and August, prior to the start of the start of my contract, I spent about 29 days working in Fayette County toward a smooth transition to officially becoming superintendent effective September 1.

These 29 days included all but one Saturday in both months, plus one Sunday in addition to 20 regular work days. Additionally, I attended all board meetings and some evening activities that were not included in the 29 days and remained available via phone and email for school board members and staff.

While in Fayette County, I took non-contract days from Daviess County and did not receive compensation from the Daviess County school district. The following days were included:

- July 1, 2, 9, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 30 and 31
- August 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 22, 26, 27, and 31

My time during this pre-entry process was spent on the following activities, although this list is not all-inclusive:

- A minimum of a half day meeting with each Board member individually.
- One hour or more introductory meetings with each Cabinet member and other key employees.
- Summer administrator meetings and principal retreats.
- New employee orientations.
- Some scheduled Cabinet meetings.
- Meetings with key community members.
- Back to school events.
- Attending state educational meetings to represent Fayette County.
- Attending training and professional development events with district staff members.

Phase II: Entry

During my first 100 school days as superintendent, my work will revolve around the four core activities. Although this will take place in concert with the day to day functioning of the school district, I will rely heavily on existing senior staff to maintain the daily operations of the district to give me time to focus on accomplishing the entry plan objectives, which will provide a

foundation for the future success of our school district. Here are more specifics about how I will approach the core activities in the entry plan.

CORE COMPONENT: Establish an effective and collegial working relationship with the members of the Fayette County Board of Education and solidify a cohesive board-superintendent leadership team focused on improving the achievement levels of all students.

1. Schedule a meeting with board chair (and others, as appropriate) to discuss a format and agenda for board-superintendent retreats.
2. Schedule individual meetings with each board member for one-on-one time to discuss expectations, roles and needs.
3. Hold a series of board retreats to address:
 - “Here’s what, so what and now what.”
 - Clear understandings of roles, responsibilities, expectations, board meeting protocols and systems for the board-superintendent team.
 - Regular and appropriate communication systems with board members in the form of writing, phone calls and/or meetings.
 - Plan and timeline for reviewing, updating or developing district vision, mission and beliefs as needed.
4. Visit various regions with the individual Board member who represents that particular area of the district to get a better understanding of the Board member’s perspective and the constituents he or she represents.
5. Establish individual and district goals that the board can use to evaluate me and agree upon a performance evaluation format.

CORE COMPONENT: Build and enhance meaningful, positive and authentic relationships with all facets of the Fayette County Public Schools community, which includes students, staff, families, staff, community supporters, business partners, faith leaders, elected officials and media representatives. To be successful, relationships must be built in the spirit of transparency, honest and collaboration. To be sustainable, effective channels of two-way communication must be mutually agreed upon and utilized regularly.

A. School and Classroom Visits

Based upon the belief that spending time in schools and classrooms provides the foundation for learning about the district as well as relationship building, I will visit every school in Fayette County by the end of September. Additionally, I may occasionally accompany instructional directors on walk-thrus.

A second round of visits will span October through January and allow me to spend one half day in every elementary school, middle and high school, including vocational technical schools and special programs. I will ask the principal and staff to craft an agenda that will allow me to experience each school as a learner, visit every classroom and interact with staff and students. By the end of my first 100 school days, my goal is to have visited classrooms in every school in the district.

In order to truly see the various operations of the school district, I will visit every renovation project, ride school buses with students, eat in district cafeterias, and attend staff meetings in various departments. I will regularly attend school and community functions, including student performances, recognition events, athletic contests, co-curricular and extracurricular events.

B. Meetings and Interviews

In order to hear from students, staff, families, community supporters, business partners, faith leaders, elected officials and media representatives, I will conduct a series of meetings and key informational interviews centered on the following six topics:

1. Name three things that are going well in FCPS that you **do not** want to see changed or eliminated.
2. Name three things in FCPS that you think we **should** consider changing or doing away with.

3. When you first heard that there was going to be a new superintendent in FCPS, you thought, “I certainly hope that he or she **does** what?”
4. When you first heard that there was going to be a new superintendent in FCPS, you thought, “I certainly hope that he or she **doesn't** what?”
5. What existing communication channels are most effective and do you have suggestions of other ways we can maintain a two-way dialogue?
6. What other general advice do you have for me?

The primary goal of these meetings will be to actively listen and gather input from each stakeholder. My hope is that these interactions will be a foundation for authentic relationships and collaborations to benefit students. I need to hear firsthand from our stakeholders to understand the priorities and needs of our community and its schools. Before the close of each meeting, I also hope to have established some routine communications protocols with the different groups and individuals so that the conversation continues beyond our first discussion.

Meetings or informational interviews will include, but are not limited to the following list. The stakeholders mentioned in this plan are in no way a comprehensive list of all community organizations. If a district stakeholder group was inadvertently omitted, please call me at 859-381-4104 or email me at tom.shelton@fayette.kyschools.us. Additionally, I am committed to meeting with any individual who wants to meet.

Educational Stakeholders

- **Students**, such as existing student advisory and leadership groups, recent graduates, recent dropouts and students enrolled in traditional and non-traditional programs.
- **Families**, such as district and school-level Parent Teacher Association leaders, parents who have children with special needs, booster groups, School-Based Decision Making parent representatives, those already serving on district advisory groups, families with children enrolled in the school district and those who do not have children in the Fayette County Public Schools because the kids are too young, or their families have chosen to home school or send them to private school.
- **Staff**, such as existing employee advisory councils, and employees from various departments and job classifications in the school district.

- **Government partners**, such as elected officials at the neighborhood, county, state and national levels, local housing and health agencies, safety and emergency management officials, and departments within the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government.
- **Educational partners**, such as those who have been involved with district reform initiatives such as One Community, One Voice and 2020 Vision, retired educators, community groups committed to educational programming, state education leaders, private school and supplemental service providers and higher education officials from area colleges and universities.
- **Business partners**, such as the Board of Realtors, Commerce Lexington, Home Builders Association, local utility companies and the medical community.
- **Civic, nonprofit, philanthropic and other local service organization partners**, such as agricultural organizations, arts and music groups, community groups that support district families, service clubs, human rights organizations and professional associations.
- **Faith-based organizations**, such as BUILD (Building a United Interfaith Lexington through Direct Action), Interdenominational Pastoral Fellowship of Lexington & Vicinity, Interfaith Alliance of the Bluegrass. I will also routinely attend a variety of worship services throughout the community to make connections with residents of all faiths and denominations.
- **Media partners**, such as reporters, editors, publishers and general managers of radio, television, print and online new organizations.
- **Take Five Challenge**, if there is anyone in the community who has not had the opportunity to meet with me and discuss the six questions in another venue, I extend a standing offer to meet with any group that can gather five people to talk.

C. Listening posts, speaking engagements, and meetings in schools and communities

In addition to the individual and focus group meetings outlined above, I will establish a series of listening posts, where the general public is invited to come and bring questions and concerns, or to simply introduce themselves. These meetings will be held at schools and out in the

community in order to provide a convenient and comfortable environment for interested stakeholders.

I will accept as many invitations as possible to speak at school and community gatherings. These might be church events, community workshops, Rotary luncheons or neighborhood association meetings.

At times, I will drop by meetings at schools, including faculty meetings, School-Based Decision Making council meetings, Parent-Teacher Association meetings, grade level meetings, professional development activities and teacher planning sessions. During these visits, I will just be there to observe and learn about issues, activities and efforts throughout the district. My intent will not be to evaluate or interject, but simply to listen.

CORE COMPONENT: Information gathering, document review, and data collection and analysis.

A. Review studies, reports, surveys and audits by outside agencies, such as:

- Agreement with Children’s Law Center
- Agreements with Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
- Audits
- Facebook postings
- Initial Children’s Law Center complaint and Kentucky Department of Education findings
- Kentucky Department of Education Scholastic Audit
- Newspaper articles, television news stories, editorials
- Organizational Health Inventory reports
- Special education compliance audits
- TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) survey data

B. Review critical internal documents, such as:

- 2020 Vision report and recommendations
- Administrative evaluations
- Advanced Placement enrollment data
- Assessment calendars
- Budget documents
- Comprehensive District Improvement Plan

- Confidentiality handbook
- Core content standards
- December 1 Child Count
- District facilities plan
- Dropout and graduation rate data
- Employee contracts
- Employee handbook
- Equity Council agendas, minutes and committee reports
- Equity Scorecard
- Financial projections and budget processes
- General fund Requests For Proposals
- Job descriptions
- Kentucky Continuous Monitoring Plan
- Legal proceedings
- Local Educator Assignment Data report
- Magnet and special program offerings
- Middle and high school athletic guidelines
- Minority hiring data
- Minutes from advisory council meetings for the past few years
- One Community, One Voice report and recommendations
- Organizational Chart
- Personnel procedures
- Press releases
- Professional development plans
- Program evaluations
- Public/private athletic agreement
- Professional Staff Data and Classified Staff Data reports
- Safety and emergency plans
- Salary schedules
- Senate Bill 168 goals and plans
- Sampling of School Based Decision Making council meeting minutes and agendas
- School board meeting minutes
- School Board Policy and Procedures manual
- School Improvement Plans
- Staff Distribution Report

- Student assessment results including: Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) score reports, ACT scores, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores, PLAN scores, EXPLORE scores, Advanced Placement (AP) scores, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data
- Student code of conduct and student handbooks
- Super Council agendas
- Teacher evaluation and supervision process handbooks and manuals
- Technology plan
- Technology Requests For Proposals
- Website feature stories

C. Operational awareness

- Evaluate key programs and major initiatives.
- Review major responsibilities and initiatives in each district division or department.
- Review the operations of department and divisions in context of how they support academic achievement.

Phase III: Development of Next Steps

This Entry Plan will afford me the opportunity to listen, observe and learn from a variety of community members while gaining an understanding of the local context of the city and the school system. Through this process I will begin to formulate ideas and frame strategies to improve our school system so that we increase student achievement for all students while simultaneously closing the achievement gap and ensuring success for every child.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the information I hear, read and observe during this entry plan process will culminate with the development and presentation of a Summary Report in 2012. I will share my findings, observations and initial thoughts about next steps with our board of education, employees, students, families and community.

Through my interactions with so many stakeholders, I hope to energize our school district and community about the focus and direction of the Fayette County Public Schools. Our first step is to establish a collective commitment and willingness to engage in the change we need to serve our students at the highest levels. Then we can build upon existing excitement and momentum to identify and execute the priority activities for our school district. Collaboration, honest discourse and a focus on students will guide our work.

Through systemic reform, we will raise expectations for ourselves and our students and ensure the elimination of achievement gaps and higher achievement for all students.