

90day

Superintendent

TRANSITION PLAN

Transforming PPS Together by Creating a Student-Centered Culture Built on Continuous Improvement



Pittsburgh
Public Schools

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As the new Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), my charge is to eliminate disparities in our schools and shape our schools so that they give all students the chance to succeed. The Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors has shared five goals, aligned with its Core Beliefs and Commitments.

- 1. Maximum academic achievement of all students.**
- 2. Safe and orderly environment for all students and employees.**
- 3. Efficient and effective support operations for all students, families, teachers and administrators.**
- 4. Efficient and equitable distribution of resources to address the needs of all students, to the maximum extent feasible.**
- 5. Improved public confidence and strong parent/community engagement.**

As I enter into my role, my 90-Day plan must accelerate my understanding of the successes and challenges affecting the Board's goals for the District.

I will seek to answer many questions including:

- What is helping or holding us back from reaching these goals?
- To what extent are our systems designed to meet the needs of all students – those students in need of support, those at the top and those in the middle?
- To what extent are students receiving equity and access to high-quality education so that all students can graduate college and enter a career that best matches their passions and skill sets?
- To what extent are our students graduating ready to compete with their peers nationally and internationally?

By answering these questions and many others, it will help me to ensure that the Pittsburgh Public Schools truly is the *Pathway to the Promise™* and on the way to becoming one of the nation's premiere school districts.

PLANComponents

My 90-Day Transition Plan began July 1, 2016, and includes pre-entry activities from (June 18-July 31) such as engaging the School Board, holding individual meetings with key stakeholders and Central Office leadership and talking with people in the community. This plan includes a “Look, Listen and Learn” tour that includes:

- Touring the District’s 54 schools, two Center Schools, and three Early Childhood Centers to meet with principals, teachers and support staff;
- Scheduling nine community forums to gather input and assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) facing PPS;
- Organizing theme-based teams that will develop strategic ideas or programs;
- Conducting an online survey with PPS employees and families; and
- Holding a series of individual and small group meetings.

It is important to include multiple ways for me to hear from students, families, teachers, principals, Central Office leadership, Board members, union leadership, community members, foundation leaders, advocacy groups, faith-based leadership, civic leaders, organizations, elected officials and governmental agencies.

Already, I’ve met with each of the Pittsburgh Public Schools Board members individually, to listen to their ideas and strengthen our relationship. I’ve held regular meetings with Central Office leaders, the assistant superintendents and other PPS employees, gaining valuable insights from their viewpoints. And I’ve been pleased to meet with a number of community stakeholders. Through these discussions, I have learned that there is much to be proud of in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, including:

- Children that attended the PPS Early Childhood Program show significantly higher scores in both reading in math in both kindergarten and first grade.
- The Board of Pittsburgh Public Schools recently made history with the unanimous approval of a new Transgender and Gender Expansive Students policy, making PPS the first school district in Western PA with a policy that articulates how schools can support our transgender and gender expansive students.
- As part of its efforts to create partnerships between District schools and community resources, the Board approved a new Community Schools policy. The policy makes way for a strategy that “promotes the success of District students and creates a network of centrally located supports for families and the community as a whole.”
- This past school year, 22 schools launched a new restorative practice program, paid for by a \$3 million grant, from the U.S. Department of Justice, over three years.

continued

PLANComponents

- The District's Summer Dreamers Academy won a 2015 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Award! The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) and the New York Life Foundation honored four high-quality programs nationwide. And, Pittsburgh Public Schools Summer Dreamers Academy was one of them.
- For the past four years in a row District schools have taken the Best Musical Budget Level I prize at Kelly Awards.
- For the 12th year, the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International has awarded the District a Certificate of Excellence in financial reporting for having met or exceeded the program's high standards for financial reporting accountability.

All of these conversations help me to consider the challenges and potential solutions that are before us. My 90-Day plan is built around a review and assessment of Pittsburgh Public Schools in four overarching categories:

- Student Achievement, Supports and Engagement
- Central Office Efficiency and Alignment
- Business Operations and Finance
- Board, Families and Community Engagement

To support a seamless transition, the plan supports the creation of a Transition Team, made up of education experts from across the country, to provide an independent, third-party analysis of the District, with specific attention to five key areas:

- Organizational Structure and Staffing
- Instructional Programming and Alignment (including English Language Learners and the Program for Students with Exceptionalities)
- Budget and Business Service
- Data, Research, Evaluation and Assessment
- Disciplinary Procedures and Protocols

I will share with the Board a report on the work from my first three months and themes from my listening sessions at the November 2, 2016, Education Committee Meeting.

GOALS

This plan has been developed to reach four goals, all aimed at creating a student-centered school district that allows for continuous improvement:

To ensure a successful transition of leadership that is effective and efficient, with the long-term outcome of delivering equity and access to high-quality education for all students.

To create opportunities for all constituents to be heard as we engage in district-wide school improvement.

To evaluate systems within the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

To foster a culture of productive collaboration that is built on trust and inclusion.

RESULTS

By the end of this calendar year, we anticipate having results that will include:

An unbiased assessment by the Transition Team;

Recommendations for the Board to consider, based on observation, research and feedback from school-based and community outreach;

The groundwork for development of a five-year strategic plan.



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, Supports and Engagement

Every employee must make it a priority to ensure the District grants each student equity and access to a quality education so that each can graduate ready for college, career, and adult life. To ensure quality instruction that is academically rigorous, our PreK-12 instructional curriculum, pacing guides and unit plans must facilitate optimal learning at every grade level (PreK-12) and among all subgroups. As we work together to change Pittsburgh Public Schools for the better, it's important that our students have a "voice" in their learning. When young people learn first-hand that their opinions and needs matter, they learn responsibility and begin to see the value in cultivating relationships and contributing to their communities. I want to create a forum that develops activities to give students the opportunity to express their needs and goals with peers, teachers and administrators. I want to listen to them, and encourage them to find solutions to their challenges so that they enjoy learning. In order to achieve this, the following action items are needed:

Superintendent Action Items

- Evaluate the current assessment calendar with School Performance and Curriculum and Assessment staff
- Review mental and physical health, social services and counseling supports that are in place to meet student needs
- Meet with the District's Instructional Leadership team to review achievement data
- Evaluate strategies that are in place for students who do not meet expectations (academic and/or behavioral)
- Review plans to increase equity and access to advanced classes such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Review plans to increase SAT and ACT scores and the number of National Merit Scholars
- Examine how the District identifies students to receive service for Gifted, Special Education, and English Language Learners programs
- Determine whether curriculum is adequate to meet PA Core Standards
- Review the District-wide employee evaluation system
- Assess the state of professional development for administrators, faculty and staff
- Evaluate PPS efforts to improve graduation rates
- Analyze the root causes for chronically underperforming schools

Transition Team Action Items

- Conduct analysis of academic programming, including English Language Learner Programming (ELL)
- Determine whether instructional programming is aligned with our goals for our students
- Conduct analysis of our data, research, evaluation and assessment protocols
- Conduct analysis of discipline protocols and procedures

CENTRAL OFFICE **Efficiency and Alignment**

The District's top priority is providing quality instruction and services to all children attending our schools. Our Central Office staff, led by Executive Leadership, must work together toward that outcome. As part of the 90-Day Transition Plan, I will assess each Central Office department. We have a unique opportunity at the start of this school year with important positions open due to pre-planned retirements, and the District will recruit the best possible candidates to fill these roles:

- Chief of School Performance
- Deputy Superintendent, School Support and Accountability
- Chief of Human Resources
- Chief Academic Officer (a position I'm bringing back in order to emphasize the importance of academics)
- Executive Director of Equity (a position critical to overcoming systemic biases that lead to achievement disparities)

In addition to elevating the role of the person overseeing academic curriculum, I've made another immediate change to the Cabinet, by giving a "voice" to the schools. Cabinet meetings will now include the six Assistant Superintendents and the Executive Director of the Program for Students with Exceptionalities. Since the assistant superintendents understand the unique challenges at each of the schools they oversee, we'll have that "school voice" present at every cabinet meeting. In addition to streamlining Central Office communication and giving voice to schools, I also want to recognize our exceptional employees. They deserve to be acknowledged for their dedication and hard work, and others would be impressed to see what they do. In order to achieve this, the following action items are needed:

CENTRAL OFFICE

Efficiency and Alignment

Superintendent Action Items

- Further evaluate the Central Office organizational structure to determine if departments effectively meet student and school-based staff needs
- Personally interview Central Office department leads including senior staff to review department strategic plans and current/anticipated staff vacancies
- Review the resumes and briefing papers of department leads
- Hold a retreat with senior staff to review school improvement plans, recent student achievement data, and key metric documents
- Assess the communication and decision-making processes of Executive Leadership to determine whether any changes are needed
- Initiate customer service goals for each department
- Examine the autonomy and decision-making provided to school leaders
- Work with Central Office departments to ensure a successful start of the 2016-2017 school year

Transition Team Action Items

- Conduct analysis of organizational structure and staffing



During my first 90 days, I will examine the District's fiscal challenges, financial procedures and budget so that we ensure equitable distribution of resources and provide quality support to schools and students.

Superintendent Action Items

- Review key District financial materials, budget, most recent audit and grants
- Meet with direct reports on budget, operations and human resources
- Review of the professional development budget
- Review Safety, Inclement Weather and Crisis Communications plans and procedures
- Evaluate school's use of technology and availability of technological resources
- Review union contracts, pay for performance structures, salary schedules and employee benefits
- Evaluate three-year rolling budget forecast and allocation of resources to schools
- Meet with Legal Department to review state education code and any outstanding legal obligations

Transition Team Action Items

- Conduct analysis budget and business services



BOARD, FAMILY and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To build a positive and collaborative relationship with the PPS Board, I'll work to establish productive relationships with each member and the Board as a whole. It's important that we work together to address governance, management, core values, beliefs and structures. These are crucial to transforming our schools.

It's also essential that we take into account the needs of the many constituents Pittsburgh Public Schools serves. This means communicating with, and listening and responding to, our students and families who want our schools to reflect the city's rich history and culture of hope and hard work. We know that inclusion and community input can help us reach our goals.

In addition to my “Look, Listen and Learn” tour, additional Superintendent Action Items include:

- Establish regular meeting times with the Board President
- Arrange a Board retreat to clarify my role and establish goals
- Meet individually with Board members to continue to build relationships
- Review the District's communication and engagement efforts
- Open lines of communication with PPS partners with the purpose of working together to improve student achievement
- Foster honest, transparent relationships with stakeholders:
 - State Department of Education and Governor
 - Local, state and national elected officials
 - Philanthropic foundation and civic leaders
 - Key business leaders
 - Educational and community advocacy groups
 - Families and parent organizations
 - College and university leaders
 - Faith-based organizations and leaders



“ When young people see that their opinions and needs matter, they **take ownership** in their own learning. If we ensure that we make **student-centered decisions**, there’s no doubt that **together** we will transform Pittsburgh Public Schools. ”

Dr. Anthony Hamlet, Ed.D.



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Built on Continuous Improvement*

Moving forward, the District seeks to reassess its strengths and assets, and prioritize opportunities for improvement. Pittsburgh Public Schools will utilize the collective knowledge, commitment and experience of District employees and people in the community, and it will tap best practices for urban districts, to develop an actionable strategic plan that all stakeholders understand and embrace.

As Superintendent, I am approaching this plan to transform our District with the belief that people within the PPS system are competent and hard-working, and that employees and students need support and consistency, rather than disruptive reforms that can set back teaching and learning.

I look forward to sharing the results of this work with the Board, and beginning the development of a five-year strategic plan to guide our emphasis on improving outcomes for all of our students.



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