



Superintendent Entry Plan

Montgomery Independent School District

Heath E. Morrison, Ph.D.

"Charting the Course to Becoming the Premier School District in Texas: The First Hundred Days"

"Every Child, Served with Excellence, Prepared for the Future Success"

Introduction

Montgomery ISD (MISD) is an "A rated" school district with a vision to be "the Premier School District in the State of Texas." How close is the district to realizing this goal? What are the challenges and opportunities that must be addressed to actualize the vision? Have all stakeholders been engaged in this desire? The new superintendent and Board of Trustees must address these and many other questions to ensure that MISD is truly on a pathway toward becoming the premier school district in the state and that all students can excel on this pathway. This work will occur as schools across the state and nation deal with the impact of COVID-19 and the short and long-term changes to education it will create.

This Plan of Entry is designed to ensure that the new superintendent, Dr. Heath E. Morrison, engages in a thoughtful, proactive, strategic beginning to leading MISD. Author Stephen Covey, in his book entitled *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, makes the case that leaders must "first seek to understand, then to be understood." There must be a commitment to deep listening and understanding. The transition activities outlined in this plan are designed to enable the new superintendent to engage in "listen and learn" opportunities in an accelerated fashion with a multitude of stakeholders; begin to assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses; identify areas that will yield quick wins as well as areas that will need intense focus; and leverage the momentum of change to not only create a network of support and resources in MISD, but also to energize the community in committing to the vision of building the premier school district in Texas.

Goals

This entry plan is designed to address the following goals:

1. To ensure an effective, efficient, and orderly transition of leadership, keeping the focus on increased academic achievement for all children.
2. To develop a trusting, productive, collaborative relationship with the MISD Board of Trustees.
3. To create opportunities for the new superintendent to listen broadly and deeply to a multitude of stakeholders and gain a comprehensive understanding of MISD.

4. To increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency and ensure high performance and support to schools within a balanced budget.
5. To establish a respectful, positive district culture centered on teaching and learning.
6. To build public trust capital and confidence through open, honest communication and positive relationships.
7. To identify and execute activities that must happen immediately, especially with the impacts of COVID-19, to ensure an outstanding beginning to the school year.
8. To build excitement and momentum for MISD's vision, mission, and strategic plan, while also establishing the commitment to engage in needed change to ensure a system of continuous improvement.

Outcomes

Expected results of this entry plan include:

- An energized district and community about the focus and direction of the organization
- A comprehensive summary of the findings, observations, and key learnings from the new district superintendent's "listen and learn" activities
- A review of MISD's current strategic direction, innovation plan, and operations and to present recommendations for how the Board of Trustees and the new superintendent will move forward to ensure organizational excellence and continuous improvement

I. Governance Team: MISD Board of Trustees

In order to ensure that the district has an intense focus on meeting the needs of all children and supporting teaching and learning, the Board and superintendent must develop a trusting, positive, collaborative, team-oriented relationship. These relationships must be established with each Board member and the Board as a whole. During this Plan of Entry, the superintendent will work with the Board to discuss issues and matters of governance, management, core values and beliefs, structures of their working relationship, and to consider issues of Reform Governance and Theory of Action.

Pre-Entry

- Share Entry Plan for feedback, suggestions, and guidance
- Engage in one-on-one meetings with Board members to deepen relationships and broaden perspectives
- Review Board election calendar to assess continuity of governance

Entry

- Conduct two-on-one breakfast/lunch/dinner meetings with all Board members to continue to build positive, productive relationships
- Hold first Board retreat to discuss communication protocols, roles and responsibilities, norms of behavior and interaction, expectations for first year, and agenda setting
- Meet with the Board president and leadership to determine how they work in partnership with the superintendent and senior staff
- Determine the schedule and proposed agendas for meetings and workshops with the Board
- Collaborate on the next Board retreat to focus on shared values, initiate reflections on organizational structure, areas of improvement, and implementation of a systemic accountability system. Suggest a book study focused on Donald McAdams' *What School Boards Can Do*
- Develop a process, structure, and timeline to measure current strategic plan, system improvement plan, innovation plan and budget for the district
- Collaborate on a performance evaluation format with objectives and indicators of success to be used to evaluate the superintendent
- Establish regular meeting times with the Board president for reviewing and constructing agendas for board meetings and how best to get board input and needed information prior to meetings

II. **Organizational Capacity and Alignment: District Executive and Senior Staff**

To commit to continuous improvement and execute the district's improvement plan at maximum efficiency, it will be critical to support and hold accountable a high-performing, results-oriented district executive team. To make sure we operate as a highly cross-functional team dedicated to a positive, professional culture, we must, as author Jim Collins states, "Ensure we have the right people on the bus and in the right seats."

Pre-Entry

- Review the current central office structure to determine focus on student achievement and maximizing operational efficiency
- Conduct one-on-one interviews and review resumes and briefing papers with all direct reports
- Collaborate on plans for returning students and staff safely back to school while dealing with impacts of COVID-19

Entry

- Determine how communication and decision-making will occur with executive team, establishing meeting protocols and systems designed to focus on increased student achievement and continuous improvement
- Conduct a retreat with senior staff to review district's strategic plan, improvement plan, most recent achievement data, review current or anticipated vacancies in central office or principalships, and discuss leadership team structures and practice
- Conduct one-on-one interviews with all unit heads in central services, focusing on alignment and execution of key strategies
- Conduct an "Organizational Audit" using expert practitioners to review alignment, coherence, and efficiency of the current organizational structure
- Initiate plans to establish key metrics and customer service goals for each functional unit to ensure the performance of central office can be determined and measured with alignment to core function and support for schools and student achievement
- Meet with district leaders to assess current data and performance of all schools under their supervision and determine quality of actions designed for continuous improvement
- Examine how much autonomy and authority principals have in the current organizational structure and ensure they play key roles in decision-making in district direction
- Plan a second retreat with senior staff to review accountability plans for all functional units, clarify process and progress toward improvement with strategic plan and district improvement plan, review current and future budget issues, and current organizational structure
- Ensure all necessary plans and preparations are in place for an outstanding opening of school; establish protocols for assessing effectiveness of the opening of schools with multiple contingencies due to COVID-19; review last spring's move to virtual learning to access current district technology infrastructure, gaps with teacher training

III. Student Achievement:

Ensuring that all students not only graduate from MISD but also receive their diplomas truly college-, career-, and military-ready is the ultimate goal and responsibility of all employees. To ensure instruction is occurring at high levels, teachers must have appropriate K-12 instructional curriculum, processes, and tools to monitor student progress as well as opportunities and resources to provide necessary interventions. Ensuring all decisions are made using the barometer of "Is it good for children, teaching, and learning?" will be emphasized in all discussions.

Pre-Entry

- Initial plans for a review of MISD's curriculum and instructional program
- Analyze patterns in student achievement data and achievement gaps in order to begin to assess current state of teaching and learning
- Assess district's expectations for all students' academic success and commitment to meeting the needs of all its diverse learners with a focus on special education, ESL and Gifted and Talented
- Identify current state of technology support and training for educators

Entry

- Meet with district's instructional leadership team to review disaggregated achievement data, status of schools on state assessments and ratings, instructional program alignment, and current goals and priority action areas for the district
- Determine the degree of rigor embedded in the current MISD curriculum and alignment to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- Assess current professional development efforts and capacity for meeting the training needs of principals, teachers, and staff; determine the degree to which it is job-embedded, differentiated, and student-achievement directed; do a "deep dive" in determining how much of the budget is devoted to professional development and how it is being assessed
- Evaluate the use and effectiveness of current formative assessments as an accurate assessment of student growth and progress; inquire about curriculum maps, pacing guides, and monitoring rubrics
- Ensure all necessary plans and preparations are in place for an outstanding opening of schools and determine how to address impacts of possible "COVID-19 slide" with not only academic loss for students but social-emotional impacts as well

IV. Community and Public Relations

During this time of initial entry, there will be a focus on engaging and mobilizing parents and community leaders in the pursuit of making MISD a world class school district. There will be a focus on establishing openness and transparency in all communication systems and protocols used by the new superintendent. Understanding the culture, history, and expectations of the MISD will be critical. The new superintendent will be proactive and deliberate in reaching out to stakeholders who have not been actively engaged in public education to make certain their voices are also heard and valued. Key questions for all stakeholders will include:

- ✓ What are the strengths of MISD?
- ✓ What are areas of needed improvement for MISD?

- ✓ As the budget remains a challenge, what are the priorities of the district?
- ✓ How can we raise the bar of academic success for all students and eliminate achievement gaps?
- ✓ What will being the “premier district in Texas” mean as a standard in MISD?

Pre-Entry

- Call key leaders, introduce myself, and build relationships
- Message (audio and written) to MISD on website
- Meet with key leaders in consultation with Board Chair

Entry

- Reach out to a multitude of critical stakeholders and establish routine meetings, communication protocols, and reciprocal dialogues, focusing on increasing student achievement and continuous improvement; initiate open, honest, and transparent dialogues with the goal of strengthening and improving strategic partnerships. This would include, but not be limited to:
 - all top-level elected officials
 - appropriate local and state policy makers
 - staff at Texas Education Agency and regional education service center
 - Chamber of Commerce officials
 - teachers, administrators, and support staff
 - student groups
 - parent organizations and local PTOs
 - university officials
 - key business leaders
 - leaders of the MISD Educational Foundation
 - civic leaders and advocates
 - non-profit groups
 - faith-based leaders and attend a variety of services during this time
 - former superintendents and current regional superintendents

School Visits

- The superintendent will conduct numerous visits to every school in MISD to engage the principal, teachers, support staff, students, and parent about where we are as a district and where we need to be to meet the needs of all children.

Community Forums

- The superintendent, Trustees, and senior staff could host multiple "town hall" meetings using the Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis model to gather community input and initiate continuous dialogues about student achievement and improvement. These meetings would occur throughout all areas of the school district.

Media Strategy

- The superintendent will meet with leaders of local media outlets, editorial boards, social media platforms and education reporters, including regional and business press. These meetings will set expectations for collaboration that is open, honest, transparent, and accurate. TV, radio, and newspaper reporters will be invited to appropriate community sessions and first day of school events. These meetings will be important to engage the media in current education issues and system improvement efforts.

V. Operations and Finance

In order to meet the needs of all students in MISD, it is critical that Operations and Finance are "premier" as well. Understanding the current strengths, strategies, and opportunities for improvement considering current budget challenges will be a critical focus of the new superintendent. Each division will be appraised to determine how they maximize support and services to schools using the continuous improvement model.

Pre-Entry

- Review key district financial materials, budget, most recent audit, and grants
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with direct reports on budget, operations, and human resources

Entry

- Request briefing papers from all office heads providing an overview of their current area of responsibility, major initiatives under way with projected time lines, a review of significant or potential problems in each area of responsibility, and major decisions that need to be made in one month, three months, and six months
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with all office heads, ensuring each division has fidelity to its core function and has a student-focused agenda
- Review district's financial projections, resource allocation, and budgeting processes; assess how district's budget and budgeting process is aligned to support student achievement

- Determine what should be centralized and what should be decentralized within the current organizational structure to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and support to schools
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with firms providing legal support to MISD to review any current legal proceedings or outstanding judgments against the district
- Review district's safety and crisis communication plan and current and future planning with COVID-19
- Conduct a review of the district's public information office and programs; review the history, services, and outreach to entire community
- Assess the degree to which all offices are cross-functional and begin to establish key metrics and customer service goals to ensure peak efficiency and support for student achievement
- Examine the effectiveness of MISD's information-data management system and technology infrastructure, especially with student achievement, budget, and human resources
- Ensure all necessary plans and preparations are in place for an outstanding opening of school

90-100 Days

Near the end of the first ninety days, the new superintendent will have learned a great deal about MISD and be ready to report on those findings. Through multiple meetings with key stakeholders, some initial ideas will have been developed regarding new directions for the future.

Around this time, another Board retreat should be scheduled to announce findings, propose plans, and collaborate with the Board on a planning system to drive improvements in student achievement and organizational efficiency. The Board-Superintendent team will be able to work together to ensure MISD strengthens a commitment to a positive, productive culture with a laser-like focus on student achievement and support to educators using the district's continuous improvement model. Proposed plans and agendas should also be communicated with the school community to promote understanding, commitment and support for the goals and purpose of making MISD truly, “the premier school district in Texas.”

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