

The First 90 Days

JAMES EVERETT, ED.D., MERIDIAN SD

JULY 20, 2020



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4 Areas to Emphasize

Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP Plans

Scope of the Position

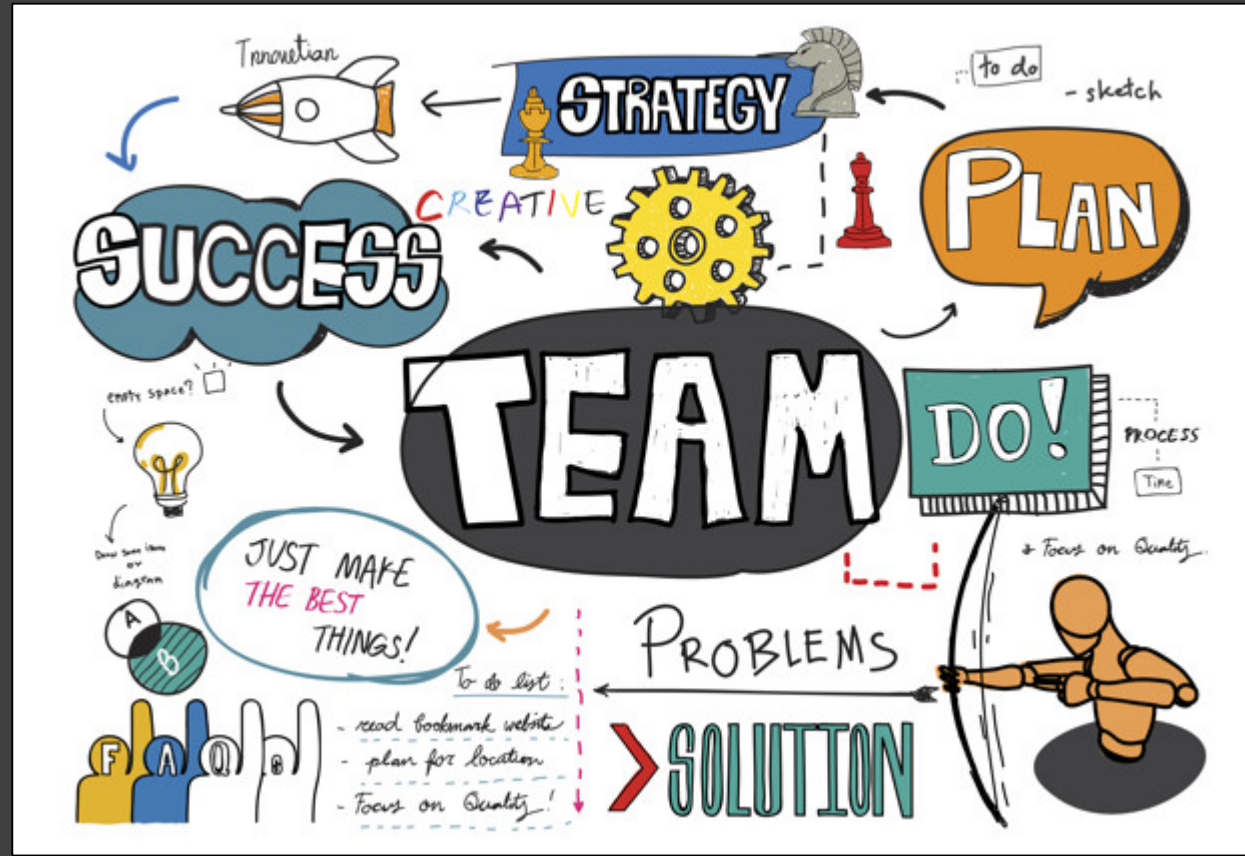
Opportunities to Engage and be Visible

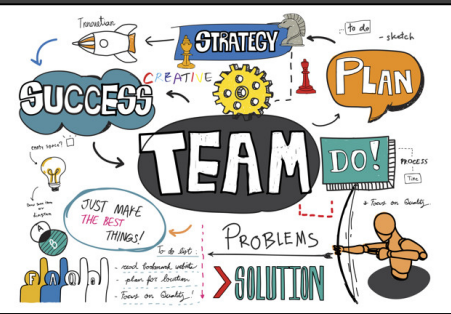
Communication Considerations

Who is Here?



Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP



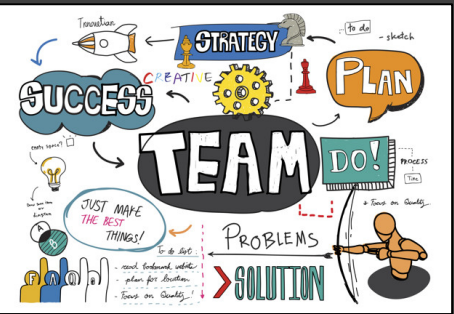


Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP

Entry Plan

- Rationale

- Develop and strengthen the governance team **Board-Superintendent relationship**;
- **Strengthen family and community engagement** in our schools;
- Foster positive relationships and cultivate a student-centered culture grounded in **compassion, collaboration, and trust**;
- **Examine alignment of systems, performance data, and climate** to determine the effectiveness of meeting the needs of all students;
- **Update the needs, objectives and work priorities** of the school district as outlined in the district's strategic plan for the successful all students; and
- Articulate **priorities and develop an action plan** based on the themes that surface through the entry plan process.

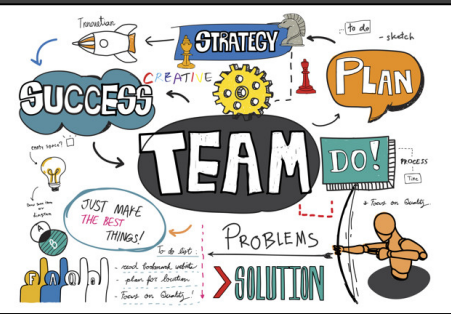


Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP

Entry Plan

- Transition Goals I

- Foster a **smooth and successful transition** of leadership while building relationships with **stakeholder groups** in support of **student achievement**.
- Increase personal knowledge and understanding of the Meridian School District and community including its **culture, traditions, and history**.
- **Ensure multiple perspectives and voices are heard** with respect to the strengths, challenges, and goals of the Meridian School District.
- Review **organizational structure, climate, and key work priorities** to ensure **alignment** of resources, efficiency, and effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of all students.

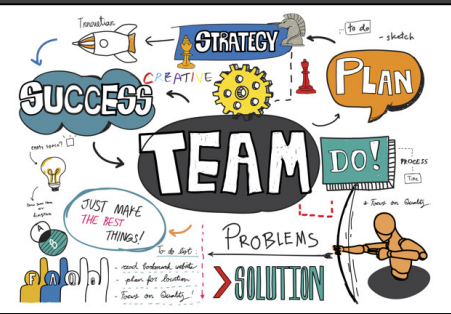


Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP

Entry Plan

- Transition Goals II

- Determine concerns and issues regarding **improving children's performance** that need to be clearly examined and addressed.
- **Develop transparent and positive communication**, access to data and a network of community partnerships to include local officials, state legislators, businesses and civic organizations, higher education, cultural, and faith-based leaders.
- **Set clear expectations** for the superintendent and others.
- **Use data and feedback gathered to formulate priorities to update the district's strategic plan and develop a plan to accomplish them.**

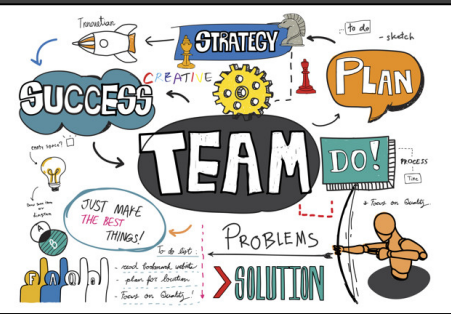


Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP

Entry Plan

- Structure

- Pre-Entry – Spring Meetings
 - District Executive Team, Administrative Teams, Students
 - Leaders, Board Members, Family Engagement, CTE, Special Education, English Language, Labor leaders, Booster Clubs, PTSA's and others
- Entry – July to January
 - Entry interviews, informal discussions and activities, review state & local assessments, as well as Healthy Choice survey results;
 - Arrange formalized activities to be accessible to staff and community members;
- Post-Entry – January to April
 - Compile and share your findings. This is your springboard!



Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP

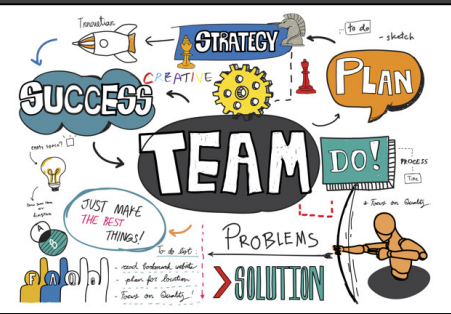
Entry Plan

- Interviews

All groups...

1. Please tell me about yourself, your family, and your goals.
2. What is going well and what do you love about the Meridian School District?
3. What are some challenge areas? What do we need to pay attention to?
4. Who else might it be beneficial to talk to as I work to understand the Meridian School District more fully?
5. What questions do you have for me?

- Listen
- Fight the urge to talk
- Take notes
- Seek connections
- Identify opportunities to engage further
- Ask for the ability to come back to them



Entry Plan | Strategic Plan | SIP

Entry Plan Informs Strategic & School Improvement Plans

- Strategic Plan
 - Is it current? Does it reflect the reality? How do you know?
 - Who do you ask?
 - What was the process? Who was included?
 - What does the data say about the strategic plan initiatives?
 - How does the district's strategic plan inform building improvement plans?
 - Are there opportunities for alignment between the two?

Scope of the Position



A word cloud centered around the word "Leadership". The word "Leadership" is the largest and most prominent, written in black. Surrounding it are various other words in different colors and sizes, including: "Appreciation" (purple), "Strategy" (orange), "Humility" (light blue), "Commitment" (green), "Responsibility" (red), "Listening" (dark blue, oriented vertically on the right), "Integrity" (red, oriented vertically on the left), "Honest" (blue), "Communication" (light blue), "Values" (blue), "Purpose" (green), "Determination" (red), "Passion" (orange), and "Principles" (purple).

Leadership

Appreciation Strategy Humility
Commitment Responsibility Listening
Integrity Honest Communication
Values Purpose Determination
Passion Principles

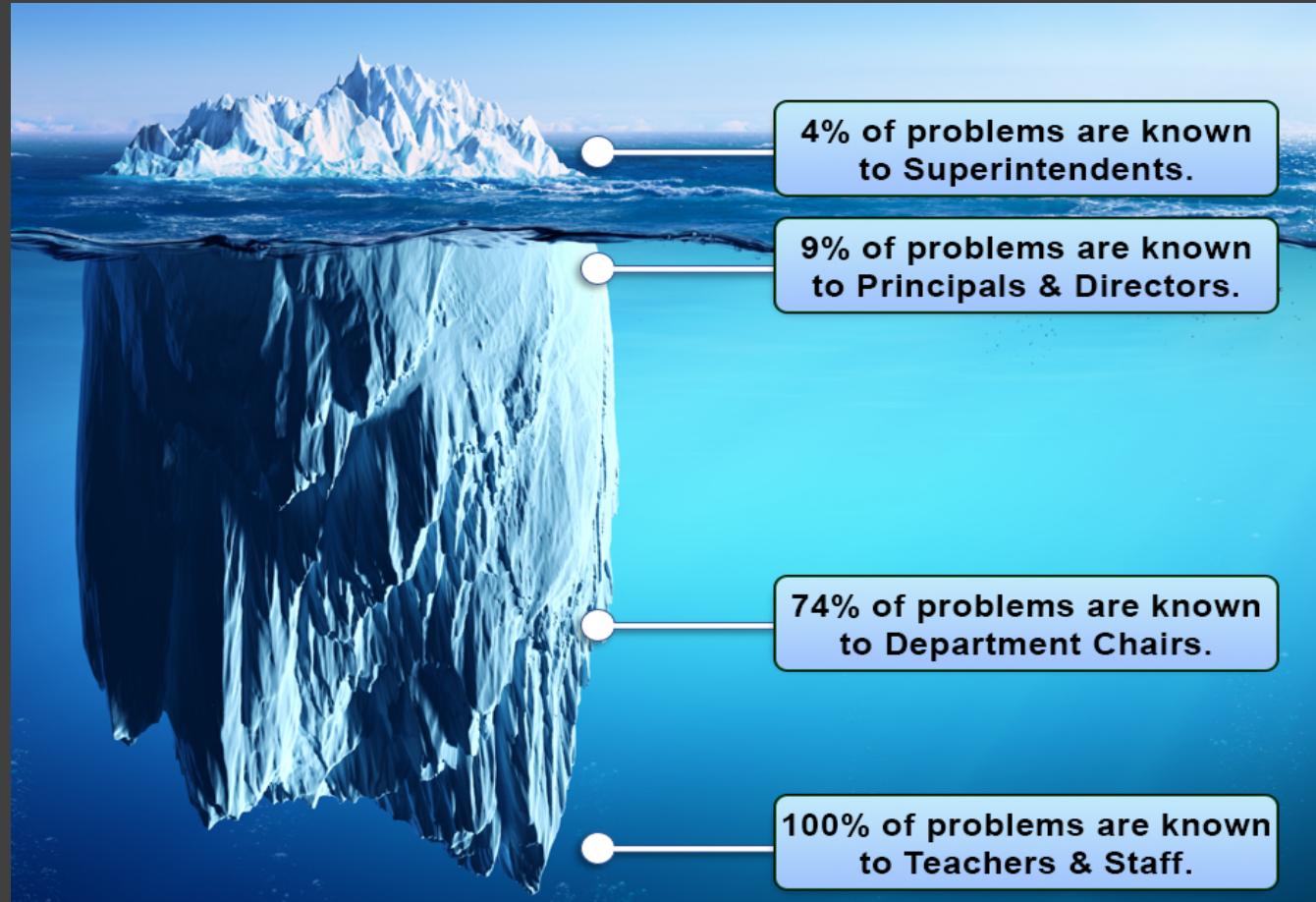


Scope of the Position

Entry Plan

- Multiple Roles & Expectations
 - 12 weeks provides a structure...
 - Your platform will guide you:
 - WE | US | OUR > > > Serve | Respond | Collaborate | Support | Communicate
 - *“Whose interests are being served in the current system?”* Ken Sirotnik
 - Break your concentrated updates to your organization and community into 3 week chunks
 - 3 | 6 | 9 | 12
 - These are your timelines to update, reinforce, and plant seeds.
- Honor your predecessor
- Ask for help from your team
- Show humility and integrity
- Lean on & into your plan

Opportunities to Engage & Be Visible



Communication





Communication

FOCUS
2020

Meridian School District

LEARNING THRIVES HERE

 **LEARNING THRIVES HERE**

Each student will succeed through quality, inspirational and innovative education.

#LEARNING THRIVES HERE







Communication

Connectedness

- Seek Support
 - Who is in your professional neighborhood?
 - Expand your footprint. Leverage network opportunities:
 - WASA | AWSP | WSSDA
 - Colleagues and individuals you value from afar
 - Pick up the phone and email those individuals
 - Gather perspectives
 - Make informed decisions
 - Be willing to share your experiences

Take Away



resonate 

verb | res·o·nate | \ˈre-zə-nāt\

Simple Definition of RESONATE

: to continue to produce a loud, clear, deep sound for a long time

: to have particular meaning or importance for someone : to affect or appeal to someone in a personal or emotional way

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Entry Plan

Superintendent James Everett, Ed.D.

2018-19 Meridian School District

Developed April, 2018



Rationale

An entry plan is a purposeful means in which one comes to understand the essential principles and culture of an organization. Entry plans provide a roadmap for all stakeholders to understand the areas being examined and the goals of the process. It is extremely important to gather as much information as possible through being present and accessible, meeting with students, parents, community partners, and staff members, reviewing data, and listening – while concurrently leading the district. This entry plan is Dr. James Everett’s pledge to listen and learn as he leads the Meridian School District.

Introduction

Dr. James Everett is honored to rejoin Meridian School District. It is his mission to serve the students, parents, staff, and community partners of the Meridian family to ensure the quality and integrity of the programs and opportunities provided are exceptional for all students. Meridian School District has demonstrated outstanding potential to exceed expectations, foster excellence and empower students to pursue their passions to be strong contributors to our community and beyond. Dr. Everett is motivated and encouraged to gather critical personnel, systems, and program information; establish strong community presence and relationships; assess the district’s readiness to grow from multiple perspectives, identify challenges and foster opportunities for increased collective impact to achieve excellence.

Entry Plan Purpose

- Develop and strengthen the governance team Board-Superintendent relationship;
- Strengthen family and community engagement in our schools;
- Foster positive relationships and cultivate a student-centered culture grounded in compassion, collaboration, and trust;
- Examine alignment of systems, performance data, and climate to determine the effectiveness of meeting the needs of all students;
- Update the needs, objectives and work priorities of the school district as outlined in the district’s strategic plan for the successful all students; and
- Articulate priorities and develop an action plan based on the themes that surface through the entry plan process.

Activities specified in this plan represent Dr. Everett’s commitment to understanding the Meridian School District’s incredible history, strengths, and challenges while honoring the work of the past. Moving forth, please know that your input is both welcomed and desired. There are several opportunities to become involved in this plan. Dr. Everett will share the findings, so all may fully understand the important work in front of us. This information will inform the development of strategies to build a responsive, supportive, world-class district for all students, where achievement is increased, gaps are closed, communication is frequent, and every student experiences success.

Special consideration has been given to include a variety of stakeholders in this plan and voices that may not be heard through traditional forms of communication.

The stakeholders mentioned in this plan do not comprise a comprehensive list of all community organizations. If a district stakeholder group was inadvertently omitted, please contact the district office at (360) 398-7111.

Transition Goals

1. Foster a smooth and successful transition of leadership while building relationships with stakeholder groups in support of student achievement.
2. Increase personal knowledge and understanding of the Meridian School District and community including its culture, traditions, and history.
3. Ensure multiple perspectives and voices are heard with respect to the strengths, challenges, and goals of the Meridian School District.
4. Review organizational structure, climate, and key work priorities to ensure alignment of resources, efficiency, and effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of all students.
5. Determine concerns and issues regarding improving children's performance that need to be clearly examined and addressed.
6. Develop transparent and positive communication, access to data and a network of community partnerships to include local officials, state legislators, businesses and civic organizations, higher education, cultural, and faith-based leaders.
7. Set clear expectations for the superintendent and others.
8. Use data and feedback gathered to formulate priorities to update the district's strategic plan and develop a plan to accomplish them.

Phase 1:

Pre-Entry, Spring 2018

Activities Designed to Prepare for Seamless Transition into Superintendent Role

- a. 11 Transition days: Present within the Meridian School District;
- b. Attend all MSD Board Meetings;
- c. Host Community Forum in April;
- d. Attend the State Superintendent Conference in May;
- e. Meet with local superintendents in April and May;
- f. Participate in hiring, budgeting, bargaining, and staffing decisions;
- g. Meet with program leaders: District Executive Team, Administrative Teams, Student Leaders, Board Members, Family Engagement, CTE, Special Education, English Language Leaders, Labor leaders, Booster Clubs, PTSAs and others.

Phase 2:

Entry, July 1 – December 31, 2018

Priorities to Ensure a Successful First Year of Superintendent Role

- a. Engage in entry interviews, informal discussions and activities;
- b. Review state & local assessments, as well as Healthy Choice survey results;
- c. Arrange formalized activities to be accessible to staff and community members; and
- d. Engage in the following representative activities to engage students, families, staff and community partners:

Students

Reach out to diverse students through clubs and student groups to meet and discuss various aspects of student programs and culture at the elementary, middle and high school levels;

Examine the results of the past four years of Health Youth Survey Results and discuss them with students;

Invite individual students who have recently graduated, dropped out, or engaged in Running Start to meet and discuss several aspects of Meridian School District programs and culture;

Meet with leaders of student clubs, leadership classes, and ASB officers to discuss various aspects of elementary, middle and high school level programs and culture; and

Develop and conduct an online and hardcopy student survey to solicit input on Meridian School District programs and culture.

Families

Meet with Family Service Coordinator to discuss the history and vision for engaging all students and families as well as supporting Meridian School District staff in communication, outreach, and opportunities to support all students and families equitably;

Work with Family Services Coordinator to identify families and community groups to visit out in the district;

Meet with English Language Learner (ELL) parent groups, Hispanic and Punjabi community leaders;

Establish Parent Roundtable Meetings: Arrange evening meetings once a month to check in, allow parents an opportunity to ask questions about topics they are interested in knowing more about and provide a venue for sharing upcoming district plans and initiatives;

Meet with Meridian Booster Club, Irene Reither Elementary PTA, Meridian Youth Athletic Association, and Meridian FFA Booster Club leaders – attend meetings;

Establish a Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council; and

Develop and conduct an online and hardcopy parent survey to solicit input on Meridian School District programs and culture.

Staff

Arrange afternoon meetings once a month to check in and allow staff members an opportunity to share and ask questions about topics they are interested in knowing more about;

Conduct voluntary interviews with teachers & classified staff at each level – while visiting Irene Reither Elementary, Meridian Middle School, Meridian High School, and MP3 campuses, as well as central office, food service, technology services, and transportation staff:

Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me about yourself, your family, and your goals.
2. What is going well and what do you love about the Meridian School District?
3. What are some challenge areas? What do we need to pay attention to?
4. Who else might it be beneficial to talk to as I work to understand the Meridian School District more fully?

Visit each classroom to watch interactions with students and their teacher, between students and be present among students and staff at each respective school;

Attend two staff meetings at each level prior to December 2018;

Meet with Meridian Education Association (MEA), Meridian Classified Education Association (MCEA) and Public School Employees of Meridian School District (PSE) leadership and building teacher representatives to discuss concerns, issues, priorities, ideas, vision, direction and expectations in support of all students' success; and

Develop and conduct an online and hardcopy staff survey to solicit input on MSD programs and culture.

Community Partners

Dr. Everett will conduct informational meetings with community member partners, policymakers and stakeholders. These meetings will address items Dr. Everett should understand about the Meridian School District and the community, as well as what is working well and what deserves attention – all with an emphasis on future collective partnerships in support of students and families in the Meridian Community.

Higher Education officials from Western Washington University, Northwest Indian College, Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College;

Whatcom County Superintendent's Group and local superintendents, including Northwest Educational Service District (ESD) 189;

Meridian Public Schools Foundation, Dollars for Scholars and Whatcom Community Foundation;

Homeport and Discovery alternative learning programs;

Early Childhood, Head Start, the Opportunity Council, YWCA of Whatcom County, and Northwest Youth Services, Communities in Schools, Big Brothers and Sisters of Whatcom County;

United Way of Whatcom County, Whatcom Family and Community Network, Whatcom County Association of Realtors and Building Industry Association of Whatcom County;

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) leaders from Alcoa, Conoco-Phillips, BP Cherry Point, SPIE;

Whatcom County Council Members, County Executive, and other elected officials;

PeaceHealth Hospital and local health/mental health professionals;

Chiefs of public safety organizations and local emergency response leaders;

Whatcom County Retired Educators Association;

Bellingham Public Library director;

Northwest Career and Technical Academy and the Technology Alliance Group; and

Northwest Economic Development Council.

Phase 3:

Post Entry, January – April 2019

Development of Summary Report and Strategic Plan Updates

Dr. Everett will provide a summary report of observations, key findings, and actions taken in May of 2019 consisting of alignment to and updates for the 2018-2023 District Strategic Plan.

Board Relations

Dr. Everett will meet individually with the School Board of Directors to develop a strong working relationship. He will also meet with the School Board in a work session format in summer 2018 for Board professional development, visioning, and planning.

Data and Document Examination

The superintendent will conduct an examination of performance indicators and examine a wide variety of data sources pertaining to student achievement data to examine trends, accomplishments, and opportunities for improvement. Student outcomes on standardized tests, value-added data, dropout and graduation rates, staff and student attendance rates, truancy, attendance and discipline data, Advanced Placement course enrollment and passing rates, SAT and ACT scores, college-bound rates, and other indicators will be disaggregated by program, ethnicity, and geography, and carefully examined.

Dr. Everett will review all critical documents, the district's organizational chart, employee handbooks, policy and procedure manuals, district and school strategic plans and commissioned studies by outside agencies.

Operating and capital improvement budgets will be closely assessed through the lens of effectiveness and efficiency, along with their alignment to the educational goals of the district and the needs of the children we serve. The current budget development process will be evaluated, as well as how the district is meeting its goals and the service expectations of our community. Given the state's court decision for McCleary and their legislative fixes, considerable attention will be paid to the bargaining process for the Meridian Education Association, Meridian Classified Education Association, Meridian Administrator Team, and Exempt staff. Levy and bond status will also be examined closely.

Conclusion

Dr. Everett, working with administrative staff, teacher leaders, student leaders, and families will analyze the data, experiences, and feedback provided from March to December. This plan provides several opportunities to listen, observe, and engage while concurrently building on an outstanding district with enormous potential. This plan will serve to help the superintendent begin to formulate ideas and frame strategies to improve our school system so that we may increase student achievement for all students while simultaneously closing achievement gaps and ensuring success for every child.

A summary of findings will be presented to all stakeholders in May 2019 identifying observations, findings and next steps with respect to the district's objectives and priorities in the existing District Strategic Plan.

Several of the ideas for this plan came from others, in particular: *"Entry: How to Begin a Leadership Position Successfully,"* by Barry Jentz and Joan Wofford; *"Entry: The Hiring, Start Up and Supervision of Administrators,"* by Barry Jentz, Dan Sheever, Jr., Stephen Fisher; *"Starting Confused: How Leaders Start When They Don't Know Where to Start,"* by Barry Jentz; Dr. Tammy Caldwell's *"Superintendent Entry Plan: Listen. Learn. Lead. Leading Federal Way Public Schools Towards a Bright Future for ALL Students,"* and Dr. Gregory Baker's *"Plan of Entry for Bellingham Public Schools: Listening and Learning to Strengthen Relationships for Student Success."*

Meridian School District

Entry Plan Summary Report - Our Commitments

Thank you for your warm welcome, willingness and trust in helping me to establish myself and build a strong foundation here as superintendent in the Meridian School District. I am appreciative of the opportunity to return and lead in such a supportive community as Meridian. It is no small thing to have someone new step in and learn the ropes. Starting the entry process last March enabled me to gain an appreciation for the hard work done before and provided context for where we shall focus moving forward. An important facet of the entry process is to help the new leader understand what has occurred prior to their arrival and helps inform responses to emerging issues. It's interesting to learn the role and system while also leading! I heard a lot of great information. I want to share a few items I heard from several sources - supported by research and aligning well with our strategic plan.

My goals in this process were to foster positive relationships, strengthen the student-centered culture and build on the existing kindness, collaboration, and trust. I also wanted to understand the multiple perspectives of Meridian School District with respect to strengths, challenges, and goals – as well as examine the alignment of systems, performance data and climate to determine how well we are meeting the needs of all our students. All of this was to make informed decisions to articulate priorities and develop an action plan for moving forward.

WE | US | OUR > > > SERVE | RESPOND | COLLABORATE | SUPPORT | COMMUNICATE

"Whose interests are being served in the current system?" ~Ken Sirotnik

I started this work by sharing my approach and expectations for our work this year at our district welcome event. An educational system is most effective when we are working together. WE | US | OUR has been a calling I've subscribed to throughout my career. It's my approach to ensuring we are serving everyone and ensure we are always considering what the impacts our decisions have on our children. We will continue to have these as important elements and a shared understanding of how we are to treat each other, our students, their parents and the community as a whole. I continue to expect we are professional and respectful in our roles, putting the needs of our students at the center of our decisions. Our five-year strategic plan provides four main goal areas to drive our work to fulfill our district vision: *Each student will succeed through quality, inspirational and innovative education.*

Strategic Plan Goals

Student Achievement
Close Achievement and Opportunity Gaps
Quality Staff and Professional Development
Community Relations

Meridian School District is poised to embrace our strategic plan goals in a way that will foster even greater growth for our students, our families, and our culture. Emphasis on student achievement, closing achievement & opportunity gaps, providing quality staff and professional development and increasing our community relationships are the main goals of our strategic plan. Having been in the district previously, I've known of the tremendous pride and commitment to Meridian from all stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, staff, and community members. There is a spirit of tradition, closeness, and intensity about community not present elsewhere.

Meridian School District is also changing. Our students and families are more diverse – in origin, language, culture, and social economic levels. Messages emerged to approach the work of the district differently – in a manner that is both proactive and consistent in how we address our goals. Our strategic plan calls out serving each and every student. In my entry process, strong sentiments surfaced for the district to be more responsive to many areas like student safety, professional development, technology needs, and support – across all levels, applicable to all schools and for all programs. There is a desire to do things more comprehensively – and to the benefit of all our students, families, teachers, and staff members.

My message on our first day together was for us to work together as one district. The relationships we develop with our students - and our families - and each other - are so incredibly important to our students' success. Serving in the role of superintendent for this great district, as well as my entry activities, revealed four main areas I want to bring forward as areas of emphasis we need to direct much energy – supported by research and in alignment to our strategic goals. We have the right people to truly change the manner in which we increase meaning, interest, engagement, and learning for all students and all of us.

Recommendations

Communications
Early Childhood Education
Social / Emotional Learning
Technology Learning Initiative

One of my early conversations with the School Board was to seek permission to identify and provide input on areas where it makes sense to supplement and enhances the strategic plan. The items above represent those areas of emphasis. Each recommendation has a positive impact on the execution of our four main goal areas of our strategic plan. These are value-added elements to help ensure the needs shared with me are addressed within the context of the strategic plan - where we derive our action plans. More information is provided below about each recommendation. Please know, too, some of these areas of emphasis have been started, some are in just now being considered and others are just now being brought forward.

Communications

Recognizing a need, there has already been previous work to improve communication: The district has established a presence with social media to promote and celebrate the great work happening in Laurel. Utilization of web sites, School Messenger, newsletters and bulletins has increased in an effort to share what is happening in the district. Feedback emphasized a need for comprehensive, ongoing, consistent communication from the district and the buildings. Internal communication channels, web site redesign, building communication - and frequency - have all be cited as areas we can (and should) improve. Increased effectiveness with communications also implies we are clear how parents, families and community members access schools and administrators - as well as providing (and share!) different avenues inviting community members and families to connect with our schools. With our emphasis on being great partners with our community we know we must make what we are doing transparent, timely and responsive. Communications also refer to crisis response and safety measures. It's imperative our outreach methods are updated, practiced and planned. This

work will start with an assessment of how well we communicate internally and externally. Moving forward, expect there to be surveys and opportunities to weigh in on preferred methods of communication.

How does this effort align with our strategic plan?

For one, it's extremely difficult to operate any system in a collaborative manner if all those in the system are unaware of what is happening in the system. And, in order to increase our effectiveness with instruction and closing gaps, our teachers and content groups must have clear channels of communication. If there were a crisis, our entire district must be aware of the protocols for communicating status and next steps to each and every family. Just in terms of safety, we can't keep anyone apprised of an emerging situation should we lose power. In such a case, our phones would cease to work after a period of time as they are digital and require a generator with more capacity than we currently have. Beyond just the infrastructure is a need to assess the flow of communication between buildings and the community. We utilize digital communication currently, but are not consistent or always timely. Protocols need to be implemented to increase efficiency, ensure those needing important information are receiving it, and accurate information is being shared. It's also important for families and students to have confidence in how they may access staff and leaders in our buildings and across the district. Finally, I'm committed to ensuring there are ample opportunities for families and community member to come together throughout the year, celebrate each other and encourage new ideas.

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education must become a priority for our district. Doing so helps to establish a culture that education is important and we serve our community birth to 21. Each district in Whatcom County, except Meridian, houses an early childhood education program with a variety of options for students and their families. The Meridian community has one preschool program – and in order to attend a child must be identified with a disability qualify for special education services. The school district currently serves 28 children in that program. No other preschool programs exist within our district boundaries. Research is clear on the benefits to students in the first 8 years of their lives with concentrated early learning opportunities. Our preschool students and their families living in our district are typically not served by [Head Start](#) and [ECEAP](#) (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) because we are unable to transport students outside the district - resulting in

burdens for our families. What is remarkable is our students who have come from our current program perform higher than their same age peers on the [WA Kids](#) assessment - a testament to the great work of our preschool staff. In addition to the results we see in these students, research is clear that during these first eight years there is rapid brain development where children build cognitive skills - the foundation for reading, math, science, and academics - as well as character skills, social-emotional growth, gross-motor skills and their ability to control impulses and problem solve. We also understand every child benefits from early learning, however, research has also shown students from low-income and disadvantaged communities have even more to gain from early education. ([Skarda](#))

How does this effort align with our strategic plan?

Addressing Early Childhood Education needs for families living in our district will put our youngest children on a path to greater student achievement, close achievement gaps and provide more opportunities for those who struggle financially. We can't do this without the great work of our teachers. We have started a partnership with the teachers and Early Childhood Learning Department with Bellingham Public Schools, well-known as leaders in early childhood education across the state, to address developmentally appropriate classroom settings and curriculum. We opened our very first Early Entry Kindergarten program this March. It is designed to provide young students who will enter Kindergarten in the fall with a half-year of kindergarten before they start in the fall. We now are serving 15 students and are excited to have it grow. The district has also participated in Whatcom Early Learning Alliance meetings and is planning to implement a Kaleidoscope Play and Learn program in the future - as well as examine opportunities to provide [Head Start](#) and [ECEAP](#) programs to support students in disadvantaged households in the near future. A comprehensive approach to investing in our youngest learners puts us on a path to addressing the foundational barriers impacting student achievement and allows us to jump-start our interventions to address closing achievement and opportunity gaps. ([A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America](#)) While we expect there will be marked academic increases in readiness for our students to enter our system with more learning opportunities, we also expect there to be a positive impact on social and emotional skills. There is also much research identifying the economic advantages of providing early childhood education. ([J. Aleksov](#))

Social / Emotional Learning

From the very beginning, one of the more consistent messages I heard was concern about student behaviors. We understand students don't come to school with the same academic preparation. The same is true of behaviors. This is an area where we have applied supports to address immediate concerns - with the consistent message that social-emotion needs are increasing - everywhere. And, to address them takes a multi-faceted approach. It's critical we continue to address the needs of all our students by ensuring we have the supports in place, current knowledge, and strategies for addressing behaviors. At the root of our approach is that discipline is a learning opportunity and behavior is a form of communication. It is as applicable to a high school student as it is to a seventh and first grader. Ultimately, we seek to teach students how to correct their behaviors. With respect to teaching the whole child, this is as important as teaching academic content because we know students in crisis are unable to effectively learn. We all want our schools to be safe and positive for everyone. We look at this as an area we need to emphasize throughout our entire system. At the elementary level, we are partnering with [Sound Discipline](#) to provide a comprehensive program to address the root causes and better prepare staff for supporting students with challenging behaviors - in addition to a number of other supports developed this year - and previously. ([K-5 Interventions](#)) At the middle and high schools, we are partnering with [CharacterStrong](#) to help us develop cultures of character and social-emotional skills. These two partnerships are part of the overall plan to address social-emotional needs. There are multiple tiers of support and layers of intervention that have been integrated into our schools in recent years. It will be important to seek opportunities to increase the expertise among our own staff so we may provide training and collaboration within our district.

How does this effort align with our strategic plan?

Our staff has worked hard to meet the needs of our students. We would like to support our staff in being better prepared to do that. There is no aspect of our strategic plan that is not impacted by having a positive and safe learning environment. If needs and behaviors are not addressed, students are not going to be ready to learn. Our students recognize and remarked on the need to provide support in their classrooms and schools. Throughout the system, students shared a desire to have check-ins by staff and teachers. They also shared they loved helping their teachers, enjoyed encouragement and how supportive their teachers and counselors have been with them. We know if we don't foster positive relationships with each other as adults - our students notice. We also know the more we encourage and engage in positive interaction with our students, the more confidence and stronger self-perception they

have toward their own abilities to be successful. Student achievement will increase across all demographics - as well as the closing of gaps. Partnerships between school and home are facilitated through consistent, persistent communication. We also want to increase opportunities to pull families together to celebrate our students. The bottom line here is we must consider their well-being as a foundational element of our educational programs and look for opportunities to help elevate our students' status at all levels.

Technology Learning Initiative

Integrating technology into educational programs provide staff effective tools to increase their effectiveness and students opportunities to enhance their learning. Educational technology - and the appropriate application in the learning environment has been a passion I have embraced my whole career. For me, pursuing educational technology is a learning endeavor. The Meridian School District has been able to provide technology devices over the years by spending any available funds at the end of the budget cycle. Purchasing equipment was dependent on whether funds were available. As a result, professional development, technology integration, and advanced learning opportunities to expand support and the use of technology have been absent from our repertoire. An implementation cycle of committed technology funds has not been our reality. Our district has done what it can with what we have been able to pull together. And, what we have accomplished has been through grit and hard work by our technology director, support staff and our teachers. There has not, however, been a progression of skills or integration of technology understanding on a large scale. We are not fully realizing the technological tools called for in today's workplace – much less tomorrow's. As a system, it is difficult to innovate in the classroom if we are not planning ahead and making investments (in technology, teachers, students, infrastructure) to leverage technology for learning. It can increase our effectiveness as educators and expand learning opportunities for our students. A helpful guiding document is ISTE's (International Society for Technology Education) Essential Conditions publication. ([ISTE's Essential Conditions](#))

How does this effort align with our strategic plan?

Based on the feedback received, we formed an Educational Technology Advisory Committee comprised of staff members from across the district. The Advisory Committee met to determine if there is a need to improve student learning that could be achieved through enhancing the use of our existing technology or through increasing access to it. The group identified multiple needs and recommended the formation of a planning committee to

determine how to close the gap between where the district is currently and where we need to be to continue providing each student with a quality, inspirational, and innovative education. With an emphasis on developing curricular support, professional development for teaching and support staff, enhanced communication and the integration of digital citizenship concepts we see enormous opportunities to impact all of our main strategic plan goals. ([MSD Educational Technology Committee Activities](#))

I welcome your feedback and look forward to partnering with all in making Meridian School District the absolute best it can be!

Thank you,

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