



Superintendent Entry Plan

Paramount Unified School District

Joshua L. Lightle, Ed.D.

Introduction

Paramount Unified School District exists to “ensure learning and success for each student by providing a quality education.” How close is PUSD to fulfilling its mission? What are the challenges and opportunities that must be addressed to actualize the vision? Have all educational partners been engaged in this desire? The new superintendent and Board of Trustees must address these and many other questions to ensure that PUSD is truly on a pathway toward becoming a premier school district in the state and that all students can excel on this pathway. This Plan of Entry is designed to ensure that the new superintendent, Dr. Joshua L. Lightle, engages in a thoughtful, proactive, strategic beginning to leading PUSD. 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 individuals and partners; 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 PUSD, but also to energize the community in committing to the vision of being a dynamic and supportive learning community that prepares each and every student for success now and in the future.

Goals

This entry plan is designed to address the following goals:

1. Establish a collaborative, positive, and productive working relationship with the PUSD Board of Trustees to ensure a cohesive and effective Governance Team.
2. Establish trust, confidence, and capacity building through communication and positive relationships among educational and community partners to ensure immediate and future success.
3. Assess the current instructional program and accelerate learning opportunities for each and every student.
4. Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency and ensure high performance and support to schools within a balanced budget.

5. Build excitement and momentum for PUSD'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 PUSD'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

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 Trustee 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, and structures of their working relationship. Sample activities to promote a coherent governance team include:

- Meet with each Trustee to discuss the “why” of becoming a Trustee, desired legacy as a Trustee, strengths and challenges of the district and to enhance relationship building.
- Conduct governance workshops to establish clear expectations and communication protocols.
- Collaborate on a performance evaluation format with objectives and indicators of success to be used to evaluate the superintendent.
- Establish regular meeting times for reviewing agendas for Board meetings and how best to get Board input and needed information prior to meetings.

II. Trust and Confidence

During this time of initial entry, there will be a focus on engaging and mobilizing parents and community leaders in the pursuit of making PUSD 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 PUSD will be critical.

The new superintendent will be proactive and deliberate in reaching out to community and partners 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:

1. What are you most proud of in PUSD? Your department/school/role? Why?
2. What are the District's top two needs? Your department/school's top two needs? Why?
3. What are the biggest challenges facing the District? Your department/school? Why?
4. If you were the superintendent, what would you focus your attention on?

Sample activities to foster trust and confidence include:

- Visit school campuses to engage and interact with students, faculty, and staff.
- Conduct listening sessions with students, faculty, staff, families, and community leaders to gain additional feedback on what we are doing well and what are challenges facing the district.
- Meet individually and collectively with district leadership, site leadership, and association leadership to maintain and strengthen relationships.

III. Instructional Programs

Ensuring that all students not only graduate from PUSD but also receive their diplomas truly college-and-career 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 support. Ensuring all decisions are made using the barometer of "Is it good for children, teaching, and learning?" will be emphasized in all discussions. Sample activities to assess current instructional programs include:

- Visit every school, meet with each individual school principal, and identify the unique strengths, challenges, and needs of each school site.
- Review and analyze patterns in student achievement for all groups of students, including English Learners, Special Education, Low Income, and Hispanic students.
- Review current alignment of curricula, instruction, grading, and assessment practices to professional development opportunities.
- Establish a schedule for ongoing site visits to conduct classroom walkthroughs with principals.

IV. Effectiveness and Efficiency

In order to meet the needs of all students in PUSD, it is critical that Operations and Finance are student-focused 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 resources, support, and services to students through the lens of continuous improvement, coherence, and alignment. Sample activities to calibrate organizational effectiveness include:

- Conduct one-on-one meetings with all Cabinet members and department 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.
- Review district's safety and crisis communication plan.
- Conduct a review of the district's public information 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 PUSD's information-data management system and technology infrastructure, especially with student achievement, budget, and human resources.

90-100 Days

Near the end of the first ninety days, the new superintendent will have learned a great deal about PUSD and be ready to report on those findings. Through multiple meetings with key partners, some initial ideas will have been developed regarding directions for the future. Around this time, another Board workshop 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 Governance Team will be able to work together to ensure PUSD strengthens a commitment to a positive, productive culture with a laser-like focus on student achievement and support to educators using a 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 PUSD *ensure learning and success for each student by providing a quality education.*