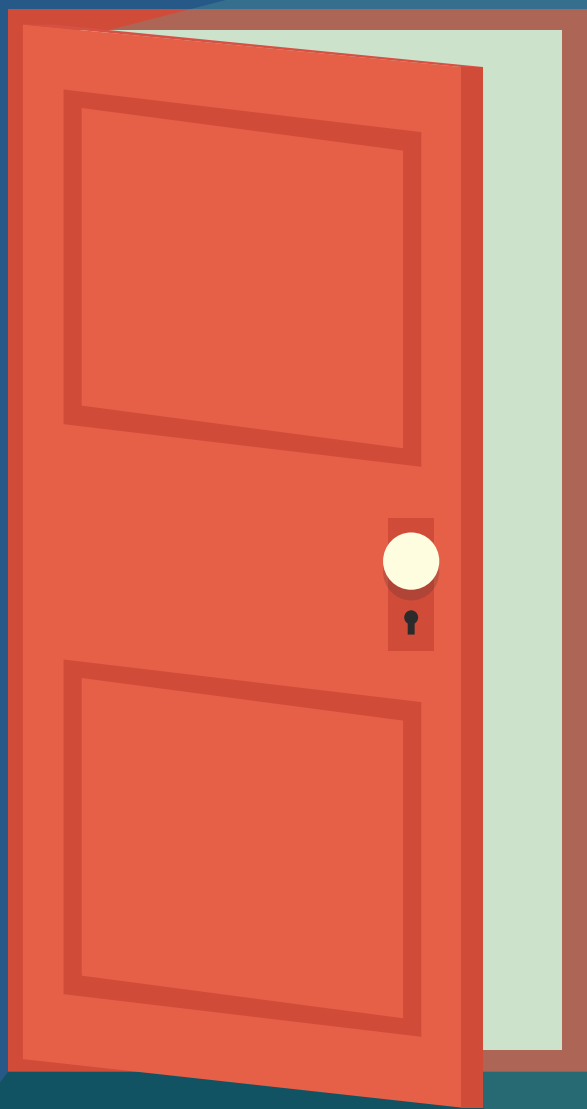
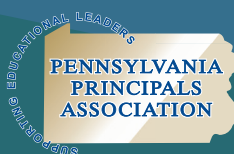


SCHOOL LEADER ENTRY PLAN



*Preparing for the
Journey Ahead*

A SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM RESOURCE



**SCHOOL
LEADER**
COLLABORATIVE

SCHOOL LEADER ENTRY PLAN

Preparing for the Journey Ahead

Introduction

Leadership is a journey. While this may sound like a song title or cliché, leadership, especially school leadership, is one filled with ups and downs, twists and turns, and emotional highs and lows. With all its intricacy, however, school leadership provides you many opportunities to influence students and adults with a hope-filled vision of what tomorrow may bring. It is critically important work, and we at the Pennsylvania Principals Association are grateful you have chosen to dedicate yourself to it.

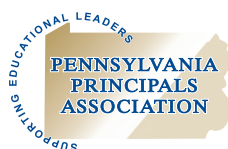
Since your school leadership journey will require you to navigate the varied and complex terrain of your learning organization, it is critical for you to properly plan for the trip, especially the beginning. Barry Jentz, lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and co-author of *Entry: How to Begin a Leadership Position Successfully*, suggests that starting a new leadership position “requires building relationships with stakeholders and developing a process for learning.” He also shares that leaders new to their positions should not “pre-judge what needs to be changed immediately but take charge of the (entry) process.”¹ By intentionally preparing for how you begin, you will be able to start building the foundation you will need to cultivate a positive culture, develop equitable systems, and create high quality learning opportunities for all members of your learning organization. Otherwise, you risk creating headwinds that may be difficult to overcome.

So you get started on the right foot, we at the Pennsylvania Principals Association in partnership with the members of the School Leader Collaborative (see back cover) have developed this School Leader Entry Plan for you. In this document, you will find guidance anchored to the School Leader Paradigm to help you frame your thinking about starting well. We discuss critical leadership competencies and attributes for you to reflect on early in your tenure. Further, we look to focus your relationship building and learning processes by providing you with suggestions of people you should consider engaging with, documents you should consider reading, and work you should consider doing. To help you be transparent with and accountable to the members of your learning organization about how you plan to get started, we furnish you with an example public entry plan meant as a model for your own. The Notes section in the back provides you a place to capture key data points about your school, possible opportunities for early wins, expectations your superintendent (or your district supervisor) has for your performance, and other critical reflections and information. Lastly, we offer you a planning tool to help you connect your entry to the efforts you will initiate to move your learning organization forward.

Overall, our hope is that you will find this School Leader Entry Plan to be a useful tool to help you begin your leadership journey well. Please do not hesitate to contact us at the Pennsylvania Principals Association if we can assist you in any way. You can reach us at 717-732-4999 or visit us on the web at www.papprincipals.org. Best of luck in your new position!

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**SCHOOL
LEADER
COLLABORATIVE**

The School Leader Paradigm

School leadership provides vast opportunities for you to positively impact and influence the lives of many, especially young people. Schools, though, are dynamic organizations which require dynamic leadership. Thus, we at the PA Principals Association with our friends in the School Leader Collaborative created the School Leader Paradigm to provide you a comprehensive leadership framework that accounts for both how you must be growing, or becoming, as a school leader and the work you and those in your learning organization must be doing to be effective. Or simply, becoming while doing.

A copy of the Paradigm can be found in the back of this document while a complete overview can be read and downloaded at <https://ilprincipals.org/grow/school-leader-paradigm/>. As you review the Paradigm, you will be challenged with the leadership intelligences needed for you to self-actualize (becoming) as a learning leader while simultaneously focusing your work of building and sustaining culture, systems, and learning (doing) in your learning organization. Further, the Paradigm describes a cycle of inquiry (plan -> implement -> assess -> reflect) meant to drive your efforts for both your own growth and the growth of your school. Lastly, the Paradigm discusses the important role context plays in your leadership and details four contextual areas (individual, school, community, and political) you must consider to lead your learning organization effectively.

Much of what follows in this entry planning guide are activities and tasks you should consider doing to start your new position positively. However, effective leaders understand the importance of leading themselves well first or becoming. Additionally, your leadership does not exist in a vacuum but is influenced by many contextual forces. So, let us briefly discuss a few critical competencies and related attributes to help with your becoming as well as context's influence on your leadership. We will start with the outside of the Paradigm by taking a look at context.

Context

If school leadership can be viewed as a journey, then context is the topography you must be prepared and able to traverse. Putting it another way, school leadership requires that you be "contextually literate."² It is crucial for you to be able to comprehend and effectively navigate a complex web of differing personalities, motivations, political connections, individual circumstances, beliefs, and opinions. Further complicating matters, you have more than one contextual web to navigate at a time. Therefore, we have identified four critical contexts in the School Leader Paradigm for you to learn about and continuously monitor, which will help you determine how one context affects the other and how these contexts affect your ability to lead. Here is a brief description of each:

- **Individual** – What happens in your home matters. The quality of your relationships with family and friends, personal finances, and health all impact your performance.

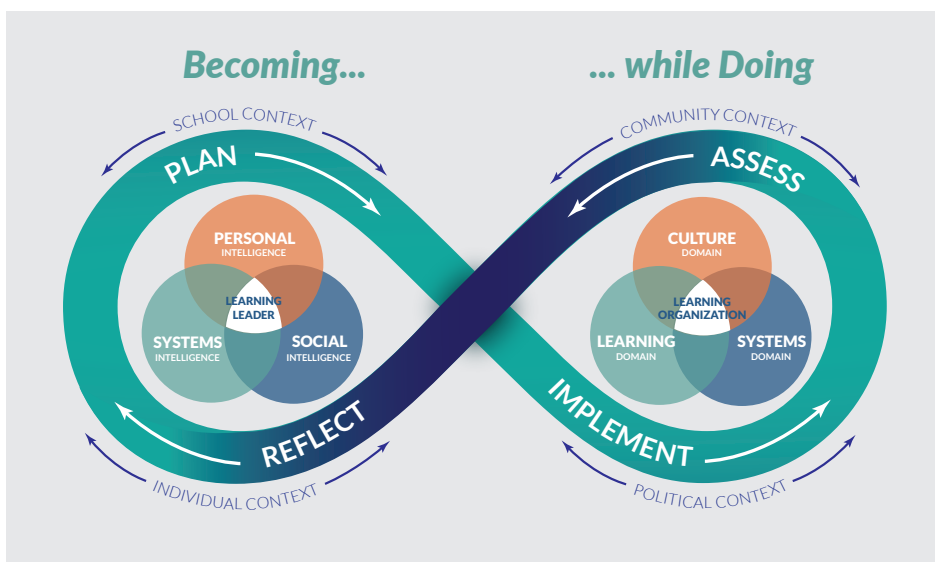
- **School** – Obviously, student, teacher, and parent voices are critical for you to seek out and understand. However, you must also give attention to cooks, custodians, bus drivers, and anyone who engages directly with students.
- **Community** – Besides being taxpayers who care about their investment and may have strong opinions about the investment they are making, community members provide a wealth of resources, often left untapped, to support students' learning and overall growth.
- **Political** – In addition to considering your own home, school and community contexts, you must realize the political forces that impact you and your learning organization. Developing relationships with your local elected officials is critical while also keeping abreast of state and federal issues impacting your school, your community, and society.

Discerning these contexts does not happen in a day. Even your own individual context may be vastly different with you and your family now navigating a new school, new community, and a new opportunity. You must invest time, be intentional, and exert plenty of effort. Connecting with people in your learning organization, community, and home through listening and relationship-building is necessary to get the lay of the land.

Later, we will discuss in more detail who you should be listening to and some of the questions you may consider asking. Before moving on, though, leadership consultant, author, and speaker Maxie Carpenter offers some good suggestions to help you become better at discerning context when connecting with others:

1. Listen for what is not being said.
2. Remember that you do not have to respond.
3. Ask thoughtful questions at timely intervals.
4. Resist the urge to give a lot of advice or state a lot of opinions.
5. Be open to whatever the path the conversation takes.³

Synthesizing these suggestions into a single premise, it is important to be fully present and engaged while inter-



The School Leader Paradigm: Find a full-size graphic and explanation on page 14.

acting with members of your learning organization. By being present, you will discover a significant amount of information and gain credibility with those you are responsible serving. Further, it will help you better discern the impact of your decisions internal and external to your learning organization. This knowledge and relational capital will help you successfully negotiate your leadership position's various contexts.

Becoming

You cannot give to others what you do not possess. Since leadership requires you to serve and give to others generously, you must develop and nurture your own leadership competencies and attributes, or what some may call dispositions. To assist you, the becoming side of the Paradigm identifies three leadership intelligences: Personal, Social, and Systems. At their convergence is you - a learning leader. Connected to each intelligence are four competencies and to each competency four attributes. Together, these elements of the becoming side of the Paradigm provide you with critical areas to focus your growth as a school leader or learning leader according to the School Leader Paradigm.

As shared earlier, the full Paradigm can be found in the back of this document with a complete overview available at <https://ilprincipals.org/grow/school-leader-paradigm/>. Here, though, we highlight what we believe to be critical competencies and attributes related to each Intelligence for you to keep in mind as you begin your new position. Additional competencies will become more important as you become fully integrated as the learning leader within your learning organization.

PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

The School Leader Paradigm does not refer to personal intelligence and its related competencies by how you must

FINISH WELL

Transitioning to your new leadership position begins by making sure you finish your previous job well. All final tasks must be completed with excellence. Personal belongings should be cleaned-up. Lights need to be turned off. Keys should be turned in, in-person if possible.

In addition to tying up loose ends, do not fail to recognize the many people who helped you be successful in your now former position. Take a moment to thank those who have been supportive of you including board members, supervisors, peers, staff, students, parents, and community leaders. When doing this, consider sending a handwritten note. It conveys a far stronger message of appreciation than an email or phone call.

One other thing. The strongest and most effective leaders finish positions well, regardless of whether circumstances are positive or negative, prior to moving on to a new opportunity. They understand it is a matter of character and legacy. It is how they will be remembered. They also know that how they choose to wrap up a position will likely follow them as they move forward.

be smart in the traditional sense, like IQ. For our purposes, the Paradigm's personal intelligence competencies necessitate how you think about your personality and strengths and use them along with your personal information to enhance your thoughts, plans, and leadership.

WELLNESS

For you to lead effectively, you must attend to your physical and mental wellness, especially if you expect to sustain your leadership for years to come. Eating right, exercising regularly, and getting plenty of rest provide you with the fuel you need to make good decisions, engage in quality relationship building, and appropriately handle the stress that comes with the job.

In addition to physical and mental wellness, your ethical wellness needs to be regularly nurtured. A focus on integrity is critical. You must also keep your thoughts, words, and actions in alignment. To support you, especially when you are being pressured to compromise your values, be sure to have a trusted accountability partner who can encourage you and challenge you to do what is right. Maintaining strong, ethical behavior will

gain you credibility and trust with those you serve, which provides you with the social capital required for you to lead your school. It will also help you secure your leadership legacy.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Your school is a complex organization. To lead in this intricate environment, you must be steady, levelheaded, and on top of things, which necessitates you manage your emotions, behavior, and activity. Self-management can be achieved by staying organized with a system that helps you track and prioritize your time, responsibilities, and requests from others that require follow-through on your part. Managing your time and tasks well will help you create sustainable routines, mitigate stress, and release you from the feeling that you are forgetting to do something. To assist you with determining which administrative tasks may be important for you to do as a school leader, we created The Principal's Calendar, which can be found at www.ilprincipals.org.

Beyond staying organized, a couple of other key attributes that will support your self-management efforts are balance and self-confidence. With balance, we are not speaking of work-life balance, though that is important. In this instance, balance means leading by accounting for multiple perspectives and viewpoints, so all voices are heard. Further, balance considers not only the organizational and financial impact of decisions, but also the personal, social, emotional, and environmental impacts.

For self-confidence, this attribute is sometimes viewed negatively, because some people align it closely with ego. However, possessing a healthy dose of

“You cannot give to others what you do not possess. Since leadership requires you to serve and give to others generously, you must develop and nurture your own leadership competencies and attributes...”

self-confidence likely means you are aware of and comfortable with your personal strengths and weaknesses. With this level of self-awareness, you will be able to surround yourself with people who possess other talents than your own. Moreover, you will be open to listen to others' ideas, willing to celebrate others' successes, and accepting of opportunities for your own personal growth.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Social intelligence is required for you to work well with and lead people. You must possess a set of interpersonal competencies and attributes that inspire others to be effective.

SERVICE

Your school strives to meet the needs of thousands of individuals including young people, teachers, parents, and the community at large. With so many needs to be met, a pervasive culture of service, or being other-minded, is a necessity. To model a service mindset, sincere empathy and generosity are powerful tools at your disposal. Empathy gives you the ability to exhibit caring for others by recognizing and valuing others' feelings. Generosity allows for you to visibly display selflessness by giving your time, energy, advice, and talent.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

We know from studying Maslow that a strong sense of belonging is important for the members of your school community to thrive.⁴ People must feel safe and be connected to one another. To make this happen, intentional relationship-building on your part will help you meet individuals' needs. Further, developing quality relationships will also assist you with facilitating connections between members of your learning organization. Through these connections, you and those in your learning organization will be able to do collaborative work that enables everyone to succeed individually while accomplishing collective outcomes.

SYSTEMS INTELLIGENCE

Your learning organization has moving parts with many people trying to influence what happens there. Systems intelligence helps ensure you understand the inner workings and leadership of the complex systems within your school.

MISSION, VISION, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Members of high-functioning learning organizations want to know where they are going and how they are going to get there. Thus, it is critical for schools to have well developed and articulate missions, visions, and strategic plans, preferably ones that members of the learning organizations had a hand in developing. With you starting new, you may be fortunate to have a mission, vision, and strategic plan (aka school improvement plan) ready for you to utilize. If not, this provides you with an opportunity to work closely and collaboratively with those in your learning organization (including students if appropriate) to dream about a better future reality and the steps you will take to achieve it.

But how do you know if you have a meaningful and viable mission, vision, and strategic plan for your school? Your early conversations with teachers, students, parents, and community members should provide you some initial insight. While you may not hear anyone share your school's mission verbatim, hopefully, you will hear individuals allude to your school's mission, vision, and strategic plan due to the personal ownership they possess for each. Putting it another way, they are excited about the great work happening at your school and want to see it continue. If this does not come up during your introductory conversations, as stated before, you may have an opening for an early leadership opportunity.

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Over the last few decades, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have worked to elevate the viewpoint of school administrators as leaders rather than just managers. Obviously, we agree with the premise that school administrators must be leaders. However, we are concerned that this almost singular focus on lead-

“With so many needs to be met, a pervasive culture of service, or being other-minded, is a necessity.”

ership has caused for a diminishment of emphasis on the critical importance for school leaders to manage their schools well. Much of school administrators' credibility as the leaders of their organizations is tied to their ability to manage their organizations' systems and processes, especially early in their tenure.

Thus, many of the suggested items provided later in this document highlight the protocols and procedures you must know to effectively understand how your school operates. These include scheduling, safety plans, student discipline, the teachers' contract, and more. With a working knowledge of your school's operations, you will be able to answer people's questions (or know where to find the answers), problem solve issues that arise, know how best to delegate various responsibilities, and begin the process of identifying systems that are no longer effective at meeting the needs of all students. With time and intentionality, you will become an expert on how your school works. Further, you will be better equipped to lead efforts to improve your school's systems, so all students are served equitably.

GET CONNECTED

The job of a school leader is incredibly complex. There is no reason for you to tackle this impactful yet challenging work by yourself. For you to be a learning leader who effectively sustains the leadership of your learning organization, you must get and stay connected with other school leaders. This group, what some call a professional learning network (PLN), can be peers, mentors, coaches, or even accountability partners. No matter what role members of your PLN play, each should be trustworthy, be able to tactfully offer critical feedback, be a thought partner, and be an encourager. If you need help getting connected with other school leaders, please contact us at the Pennsylvania Principals Association. We can assist you, so do not delay!

Early Wins and Pitfalls

Entry into your new position can provide both some unique opportunities but also potential hazards. In order to identify early wins and avoid pitfalls, take a “look, listen, learn, and record” approach. Observe for yourself what is currently going on in your building and community. Listen intently to students, teachers, parents, and community members. Learn “why” things are the way they are. Lastly, be sure to take note of what you are seeing, hearing, and discovering to reference and reflect on later. You will likely find these notes, which can be jotted in your planner, written in a journal, or we have provided space in the back of this document, to be invaluable to you now and in the months ahead.

So, you may be saying to yourself, “The look, listen, learn, and record approach makes sense, but what are some examples of early wins and pitfalls?” Generally, early wins and pitfalls are contextual in nature. However, below are a few specific examples of each that exist in most settings:

EARLY WINS

- **Learning people's names, even before you meet.** Consider grabbing last year's yearbook or scanning the faculty web page to begin studying faces and names, especially your staff. People will be impressed if you are able to call them out by name before you shake their hand for the first time.
- **Writing thank you notes – a lot of them.** You will be meeting with many people during the early days of your transition into your new position. Thanking people with a short, hand-written note for taking some of their valuable time to meet with you will go a long way to begin building relational capital with them.
- **Following-through on your commitments.** While we recommend you not make significant organizational or systemic changes early in your tenure, this does not mean that you should refrain from

helping staff, students, or parents with reasonable requests. When you do commit to providing support, though, be sure to follow-through. If you find fulfilling a request is taking longer than expected, be sure to circle back to whom you have committed and keep them posted on your progress.

- **Communicating regularly.** The members of your learning organization want to be in the know. With so many communication channels now available to them, they expect to be. Thus, it is important for you to develop and commit to a manageable routine of communication to your teachers, students, parents, and community.
- **When you are not aware of the answer to a question, be willing to say, “I don't know,” followed closely with, “but I'll find out.”** Nobody knows everything, especially when it comes to running an organization as large and complex as a school. In fact, being willing to say, “I don't know,” can build your credibility as long as you do not respond to every question with that response. Further, you must follow-through on your commitment to find answers.
- **Building a team mentality.** Change your use of pronouns to intentionally build inclusiveness and equal respect for all team members. Minimize the use of “I, me and my.” Replace them with “We, us, and our.”

PITFALLS

- **Killing the “sacrosanct.”** Seniority based parking spaces, student assemblies, or favorite lessons to teach are just a few examples of the “sacrosanct” that may be very important to members of your learning organization. These and other things may indeed need to be changed or eliminated over time, especially if they are inequitable, harm your school's culture, or deter your ability to improve student performance. Just be sure you possess sufficient relational capital and justification to take them on, and remember to have the backing of your superintendent.
- **Reacting too quickly.** You will meet with many people in the early going, and some of those you meet with may

have “urgent” requests that they would like you to resolve. The “urgent” requests that we speak of do not fall into the reasonable category of providing help with tracking down needed supplies or tech support. “Urgent” requests come from individuals that likely have asked the same of your predecessor, may be self-serving, and might negatively impact others in your learning organization. In these instances, it is important to listen, take notes, and remain non-committal until you have an opportunity to learn whether a decision on your part is the right move and free of unintended consequences.

- **Saying, “At my old school, we...”** Surely, there are many things about your previous learning organization that are worth bragging about and might be helpful if implemented in your new school. However, the members of your new school will likely see themselves as unique and may push back against what they could perceive as you just trying to regurgitate ideas for which they have no ownership. Rather than saying “At my old school...,” consider leading with, “What do you think about...,” or “Have you ever considered...”
- **Changing too much too soon.** We know you are excited to make a lasting mark on your learning organization. However, do not take on too much too fast. You risk harming relationships and losing trust with the members of your learning organization. As you begin, they are more interested in you taking time to learn about them and discovering how you can grow and improve together.

Capitalizing on early wins and dodging pitfalls during your entry will likely enhance your credibility as a school leader, or at least protect it from harm. So, be sure to “look, listen, learn, and record.” Use the Notes section in the back to record potential early wins and pitfalls that you identify during your transition into your new position.



CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Schools continue to become more diverse with our learning institutions now serving a majority-minority population of students.⁵ Therefore, you must be culturally responsive and lead with a lens of equity by promoting cooperation, collaboration, and connectedness within your learning organization while simultaneously responding to individual diversity, need, and capacity. In order to successfully accomplish this important yet complex task, be visible and present, even in places where you may not be comfortable.

Connecting with diverse populations of students in your school and people in your broader community will help you develop critical relationships and gain credibility as a community leader and partner. With these relationships and credibility, you will then have the knowledge necessary to advocate for the needs of all members of your learning organization. Further, you will possess vital leverage to bring these diverse groups together to work toward the common goal of doing what is best for all your students and your entire learning organization.

As you reflect on the competencies discussed above and the remainder outlined in the full School Leader Paradigm, please do not lose sight of this: When we receive phone calls at the PA Principals Association from school leaders who are in trouble... and it is their fault... and it does happen, their issues usually stem from troubles they have related to the becoming side of the Paradigm. Ethics lapses, relational issues, problems managing time, and other difficulties - all of these which do not directly relate to whether test scores are raised - put these school leaders in jeopardy of losing their jobs and maybe worse. So, please take time to reflect regularly on the competencies and attributes shared on the becoming side of the Paradigm.

While we previously stated that you cannot give to others what you do not possess, focusing solely on the intelligences with the corresponding competencies and attributes is not enough. You must be able to demonstrate your competence by actually doing the work. This takes us to the doing side of the School Leader Paradigm.

Doing

From our time encouraging and equipping school leaders, we know you will invest a significant amount of effort early in your tenure building relationships, establishing trust and learning about your school. This is essential so you can begin shaping the climate, then culture of your organization. Once strong relationships and high levels of trust have been built, you can start dismantling ineffective and inequitable systems while simultaneously creating improved systems that support a new culture. Over time, as the culture grows and systems are in place that sustain the desired culture, you will then be able to push on student and adult learning tactfully and concurrently. We refer to this process as leading the convergence of culture, systems, and learning. With this convergence, you will not just be leading a school but a learning organization.

To assist you with beginning the processes of cultivating culture, building systems, and nurturing learning in your new leadership role, we have identified several action steps for you to consider doing. These measures will help you deliberately learn about the members of your school and community, discover the ins and outs of your school's systems, and begin formulating a vision for how to improve student and adult performance. Let us start with culture.

CULTURE

As we alluded to previously, it is well established that the culture you create in your learning organization must be built on a strong foundation of positive relationships. From our experience, developing positive relationships requires deep caring by you for those you lead, because as the saying goes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." To show people you care, your time is the most valuable asset you can gift to them. So, plan on spending a significant amount of time intentionally connecting with and learning about the members of your learning organization. Do not wait. Proactively schedule time to meet with students, staff, and key members of your community. Clearly, some are more urgent than others, but just as clear is the need to let all these individuals know that you value the role they have in your school. To aid your efforts, we have provided a fairly comprehensive list of people you may want to meet with in the weeks and months ahead, some questions you may want to ask, and other thoughts for your consideration. (See column at right.)

CULTURE: PEOPLE TO MEET WITH

- Superintendent and District Supervisor
- Your Administrative Assistant
- District Leadership Team
- Central Office Staff
- Your Leadership Team (Assistant Principals, Deans, Department or Grade Level Chairs, Athletic and Activity Directors)
- School Counselors
- Nurse
- Teachers
- Support Staff (Other Administrative Assistants, Custodians, Cooks, Bus Drivers, Paraprofessionals)
- Coaches and Activity Sponsors
- School Resource Officer
- Student Leaders and Student Groups
- Parent Group Leaders and Parent Groups
- Community Leaders and Community Groups
- City and County Officials (Mayor, Police Chief, County Sheriff, Fire Chief)
- Local States Attorney
- Local Media Reporters and Editors
- PA Principals' Regional Service Specialist
- Regional Superintendent of Schools
- Religious and Ethnic Leaders and Groups
- School District Foundations, Scholarship Funds, Alumni Associations, etc.
- Active Special Interest Groups in the School District
- Area Non-Public School Administrators
- Area Higher Education Institution Officials
- Home Visits

YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

Your superintendent is the first person you should seek to meet with as you get started. Hopefully, you will not have to set up the meeting since your superintendent should desire to connect with you to offer support during your transition. If this does not happen, reach out to your superintendent's administrative assistant to get on his or her calendar as soon as possible.

The initial meeting (or meetings) with your superintendent is important for several reasons. You need to know your superintendent's vision for the school district to understand how this person hopes to see the district improve. In turn, this will help you determine what you need to be doing in your school to help move the district forward as a whole. Additionally, it is crucial for you to know what your superintendent expects of you as a school leader in your district. For example, will you be expected to volunteer in community organizations, take a leadership role in your professional association, or obtain another degree? Besides learning about vision and expectations, your first meeting also begins the important process of understanding how best to communicate with and relate to your superintendent. Of all the relationships you will build in your school district, few are as important to your long-term success in your school as the relationship between you and your district's leader.

“People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. To show people you care, your time is the most valuable asset you can gift to them.”



You do not need to be everything to everyone! Build the capacity of your team! Create a checklist for activities or events as you experience them firsthand and then hand them off in the future to team members to lead under your direction.

Here are some questions you may want to ask during your first meeting(s) with your superintendent:

- What do you love about this school district and community?
- What is your vision for this school district? What is needed for it to improve?
- What/who are the greatest supporters of your vision?
- What/who are the greatest impediments to achieving your vision?
- What needs to happen in my school to help the district achieve your vision?
- What are your expectations of me as a school leader in this district and community?
- When is it critical that you have a heads up on an issue from me? Student issues? Parent concerns? Emergencies? Board members breaking the chain of command?
- What is your preferred method for me to communicate with you? Email? Phone call? Text? Schedule a meeting? How do I work with or through your administrative assistant?
- How do I appropriately provide input or voice concerns about decisions the Board, you, or district leadership are considering?
- What is the process for my evaluation? (This question may be better suited for your district supervisor who you should also meet with early in your tenure.)

YOUR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

After your superintendent, a close second for who you need to meet with next is your administrative assistant. Those who spend any length of time in schools know how critical administrative assistants are to the successful operation of school buildings. In many ways, these essential workers are the caretakers of their learning organizations. Administrative assistants act as the face and voice

of their schools by greeting the many people who pass through the door and answering the numerous phone calls that come in. They manage a multitude of messages for students and staff, collect data, generate reports, keep records, help kids with possessions they lost or forgot at home, lend a compassionate ear when others are under stress, and do whatever else is asked to ensure their schools keep running smoothly. On top of all of that, they take care of their school leaders... meaning you.

So, it should go without saying that your administrative assistant is one of the most valuable assets of your learning organization. Empowering he or she with support and the appropriate authority has the dual effect of positively impacting your ability to lead and improving outcomes for your learning organization. Although it will take time for you and your administrative assistant to best learn how to work together, here are a few items you may want to begin fleshing out in the early going:

- In order to begin to get to know your administrative assistant and how you can help him or her be successful, consider these questions:
 - What do you love about this school and community? What are you most proud of?
 - Do you feel ownership in this learning organization? Why or why not?
 - What does this school and community need from me as its leader?
 - Who are the influencers in the school and community?
 - Who is doing particularly meaningful and significant work for young people?
 - How would you describe the school's climate and culture?
 - What school traditions and values must be preserved? Why are they important?
 - What do you enjoy most about your job?
 - What resources do you need to do your job effectively?
 - What can I do to support you?

- Since administrative assistants have a varying range of job duties, it is important to understand what work he or she is responsible for doing in the learning organization (i.e. managing student records, data entry, updating the school's website, overseeing the activity fund, etc.). Be sure to provide your assistant time to give you a thorough overview of his or her job description.
- Determine what type of access and authority you will give your assistant to your mail, email, and calendar.
- Although no day is the same for a school leader with some days being downright chaotic and stress-filled, your administrative assistant can provide you an important buffer from people and issues seeking an inordinate amount of your time. This buffer is not for you to avoid people or keep you from tackling difficult problems. However, talk with your assistant about the help you need protecting your schedule so you can spend meaningful time in classrooms, proactively engage with staff, students, and parents, and focus on work to move your learning organization towards your vision.
- Set up a regular day(s) and time(s) to meet each week to check-in, review the school calendar, evaluate progress on delegated tasks, and discuss any school related issues and concerns.

YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Depending on your local context and capacity, you may already have a formal leadership team in place made up of assistant principals, athletic/activity director, school counselors, department heads, or lead teachers. Or, you may be in a situation where you need to assemble an informal leadership team, which will take some time to ensure you find the right people. If a leadership team already exists, here are few questions that may assist you with your initial engagement with this critical group:

- What are your job responsibilities?
- Do you feel ownership in this learning organization? Why or why not?
- What does this learning organization and community need from me as its leader?
- What school traditions and values must be preserved? Why are they important?

- How would you describe the school's climate and culture?
- What are some reasonable opportunities for early wins as I begin?
- What is the school's mission and vision? What work is being done to move us towards our vision?
- Do you feel this learning organization is student-centered? Why or why not?
- Do you feel this learning organization provides equitable learning opportunities for all students? Why or why not?
- Explain the learning organization's school improvement process. What stakeholders are involved? What data is being used to monitor progress?
- What school improvement successes has the learning organization realized? What of the school improvement plan needs attention?

YOUR STUDENTS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY

Besides your superintendent, administrative assistant, and leadership team, there are many other people you will want to connect with and get to know early in your tenure. While students, staff, and parents are obvious groups you will want to meet with, also take time to engage with community members who do not have students in your school or some other direct tie. It may not seem intuitive to connect with them. However, do not forget that they care about their community, and they are taxpayers. Here are some questions that may help you with your conversations with the various members of your learning organization.

For all members:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Where are some great local places to eat?
- What are some fun local activities for adults and families?
- What type of reputation does the school have in the community?
- What do you love about this school and community? What are you most proud of?
- What does this school and community need from me as its leader?

- Who are the influencers in the school and community?
- Do you feel ownership in this learning organization? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the school's climate and culture?
- What school traditions and values must we preserve? Why are they important?
- Who is doing particularly meaningful and significant work for young people?
- What is the school's mission and vision? What work is being done to move us towards our vision?
- Do you feel this learning organization is student-centered? Why or why not?
- What skills do young people need to be successful?
- Do you feel this learning organization provides equitable learning opportunities for all students? Why or why not?
- What should we be doing as a learning organization to improve our services for our young people?
- Who else should I be meeting with to better learn about our school and community?

For students:

- What can I do to support you and your fellow students?
- Do students feel connected to school? Why or why not?
- Do you feel this school provides sufficient educational and extra-curricular opportunities for you to be successful? If not, what do you believe needs to be made available that is not currently?

For staff:

- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- What resources do you need to do your job effectively?
- What can I do to support you and your colleagues?
- What are some cultural pitfalls I should be mindful of?

For parents:

- Do you feel this school provides sufficient educational and extra-curricular opportunities for your child to be successful? If not, what do you believe needs to be made available that is not currently?
- Do you receive sufficient communication about your child's academic progress? If not, what would you prefer?
- Do you receive sufficient communication about school information, events, and important calendar items? If not, what would you prefer?

In addition to helping you build positive relationships, these meetings will also facilitate your understanding of the school, community, and political contexts of your learning organization. Be sure to either take plenty of notes during your discussions or jot down your reflections soon after your meetings conclude. Do not forget about the space provided to you in the back of this document. These thoughts will then be available for you to revisit and study. Hopefully, you can identify critical information like whether your learning organization's mission and vision are known and understood, potential areas for improvement, cultural pitfalls, and key influencers in your school and community.

TRADITIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

While interpersonal relationship building provides you the means to establish much of the type of climate and culture you hope to foster in your learning organization, start of school traditions, celebrations, and activities are also important tools. Consider collaborating with one or more groups of staff, students, and parents to plan for new teacher orientation, professional development days, and the first day of school.

Ensure these days are filled with meaningful work, ample time for teachers to set up their classrooms, and plenty of fun. Think about how you can creatively weave in sharing your personal expectations and vision for the year. This includes you voicing what students and staff can expect from you like kindness, fairness, a growth mindset, hard work, and making decisions that are in the best interest of students, staff, and the school. When working with the team you have assembled, be sure to have them get you up to speed on what

members of the learning organization expect for the beginning of the year and to protect time-honored traditions that have deep cultural roots. No need to jump into an unnecessary pitfall, especially when your desire is to get everyone off to a great start.

Lastly, do not minimize the importance of your presence during the run-up to the start of school but particularly on the first day. On day one, take time to briefly check-in with all members of your staff, including custodians and cooks. Stand out front at the beginning of the day to wave to parents, fist-bump students, and be the first smiling face everyone sees heading into your building. Most importantly, get into plenty of classrooms, laugh a lot, and communicate with everyone how glad you are to see them at school.

ETHICS

As the leader, you set the tone and character of your school and serve as a role model for not only your staff, but most importantly, for your students. Our conscious and unconscious actions, influenced by our own and society's values, habits, mores, and culture, will have an impact on those we lead. Our integrity is challenged during times of conflict. Acknowledging the impact of your actions on others, and your powerful influence, is the beginning of a career grounded in ethical behavior. Author Toni Faddis offers the following ten leadership strategies can assist you in effective decision making:

1. Identify and model your core values.
2. Be curiously introspective.
3. Listen generously.
4. Create an inclusive school climate.
5. Discover your community's hopes and dreams.
6. Unify around a collective vision.
7. Consider moral and legal consequences of decisions.
8. Ensure equitable processes and outcomes.
9. Walk the talk.
10. Become a strategic influencer.⁶

Understandably, your efforts to build relationships, leverage start of school traditions and celebrations, and model ethical leadership are key elements to a successful transition into your new position. However, it is also critical for you to

REMINDER!

Regardless of your personal, religious, or political beliefs, it is your responsibility to treat all individuals with dignity and respect.

begin getting up to speed on your learning organization's systems. While we caution changing many of your school's systems in the early going unless there are overt problems to be addressed, there is plenty for you to learn. This takes us to the next section.

SYSTEMS

As discussed in the School Leader Paradigm, school leaders must ensure their learning organizations' systems are equitable for all students and focus on an inspirational vision for the future. Further, schools' systems must be efficient, keep an eye on safety, and provide for constant fine tuning and improvement. Always be mindful that much of your credibility as your learning organization's leader is predicated on your ability to keep your school's systems running smoothly. When they are not? You must be able to effectively and collaboratively problem solve solutions.

In the chart on the next page, you will find recommendations for several documents you should consider studying (if available) along with some activities you might find helpful in learning about your school's systems. The documents and activities are categorized by: Communications – Governance & Planning – Safety – Labor Relations – Finances – School Facilities – Food Service – Transportation – Other Miscellaneous Items. Beyond what is listed in the chart, we also provide thinking about communication and the special attention it needs early in your tenure. Do not forget that the Notes section in the back affords you a place to capture your thoughts and reflections as you pour through these many documents, assess your facility, and learn about your school's various systems.

SYSTEMS: DOCUMENTS & ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER

Communication

- School Website
- Social Media Accounts
- School Newsletters
- Automated Communication Systems (calling, texting, emailing)

Governance & Planning

- Designate Second in Command When You are Absent from the Building
- School Vision/Mission/Beliefs
- School Improvement Plan
- Meeting Agendas (Faculty, PLCs, etc.)
- Special District Programs or Initiatives
- School Board Policy Manual
- Student Demographic Information
- Student/Parent Handbooks
- Student Attendance Data
- Student Discipline Data
- Administrative Regulation Manual
- Current School Year Calendar
- Master Class Schedule
- Class Trip Procedures
- Student Enrollment Projections
- School District Demographic Study
- State Reports (Fall Housing Report, End of Year, Etc.)

Finances

- Building Budget
- Activity Fund/Policies
- Title Grants
- Other Grants
- Procurement Procedures
- Warehousing Facilities
- Purchasing Cooperatives
- Audits

School Facilities

- Conduct Walk Through of All School Facilities with Director of Buildings and Grounds and/or Head Custodian
- Meet with Custodial and Maintenance Staff
- Check Condition of Playgrounds, Ball Fields, Gym, Equipment, Etc.
- Find Location of Emergency Shutoffs for Water, Gas, and Power Safety
- School Safety/Emergency Plan
- School Threat Assessment Plan
- School Bullying Policy
- School Emergency Communication Plan

- Review Security of Facility and Visitor Entry Procedures
- Set Schedule for Emergency Drills (Fire, Tornado, Intruder, Etc.)
- Set Schedule for Required Staff Trainings (Bloodborne Pathogens, etc.)

Labor Relations

- District Organization Chart
- Staff & Administration Salary Schedules/Benefit Programs
- Current Negotiated School Employee Contracts
- Job Descriptions
- Staff Supervision Duties & Schedules
- District Seniority List
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Conflict Resolution Program
- Gift Ban Act Policy
- Existing Contract Grievances
- Meet with Collective Bargaining Unit Building Representative

Food Service

- Conduct a Walk Through of Kitchens and Eating Areas with Head Cook
- Meet with Cooks and Other Food Service Staff
- Review District Policy and Practice on the Use of Vending Machines
- Eat Periodically in the Cafeteria

Transportation

- School District Transportation System/Schedule
- Ride Bus Routes in Morning and Afternoon
- Meet with Bus Drivers and Mechanics
- Athletics/Activities
- Athletics and Activities Schedules
- Supervision for Home and Away Events
- Procedures for Tickets and Money Safety
- Hiring and Evaluation of Coaches/Sponsors

Other

- Student Picture Contracts
- Vending Machine Contracts
- Yearbook Contracts
- External Consultant Contracts

COMMUNICATION

When reviewing and reflecting on your learning organization's multiple systems, communication is one you can and should influence immediately. The members of your learning organization expect for you as the leader to communicate well and routinely. It makes sense, right? People want to be informed. Plus, the efficiency for how many of the other systems in your school operate is dependent on good, clear communication, especially from you. While textbooks have been written about good communication strategies school leaders should consider employing, here are some condensed thoughts starting with your learning organization's normal communication tools like the school's website, social media presence, and newsletters.

Your school's website is a powerful instrument for communication because it is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. You may already be quite familiar with the site having spent significant time there during the job search process. You may already know that you have a website that is easy to navigate, viewable on any device, and has critical information at the ready. Or, you know your school's website needs an overhaul that will require work past the transition phase of your tenure. Either way, your community will be visiting your site looking for critical information such as the school calendar, class schedule, lunch schedule, activity and athletic schedules, teacher contact information, access to grades, and daily announcements. These items need to be easily accessible from the home page or just a click or two away. Doing so will help save community members' frustration, especially for your parents.

Unlike your school's website which people must actively visit, social media allows for you to push information to the members of your learning organization wherever they are on their preferred device, most likely their phone. Tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others provide you with vehicles to quickly share timely announcements, critical information during emergencies, and all the good news happening at your school. Hopefully, your followers will re-share what you push out to expand your reach. If your school does not already have one, consider creating a social media hashtag to help those who are interested in closely following what your school is doing.

Before moving on from social media, it is important we recognize that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc. are increasingly being used to spread misinformation, neg-

ativity, and in more extreme cases, threats against students, teachers, and administrators. When dealing with these difficult issues, do not hesitate to seek out general counsel or the authorities when necessary to protect everyone's rights and keep students and staff from harm. While it may seem counterintuitive, it is due to the misuses of social media that your learning organization needs a strong presence in these digital spaces, particularly to counter those who are hypercritical. A constant stream of positive news, pictures, and short videos will help you control the narrative people are telling about your school. It is also critical that you DO NOT engage via social media if negative information is being broadcast.

While a more traditional form of communication, newsletters give you space to share in-depth and detailed stories about what is happening in your school unlike the quick hits of information provided through your social media channels. Do not overlook the important medium of newsletters, because stories resonate. Stories elicit an emotional response. More than statistics or data points, stories give you a vehicle to provide critical context about what is happening in your school with your students and staff. Further, these stories allow for you to amplify your learning organization's mission and vision for the future.

In addition to effectively leveraging your school's formal communication tools, you should also develop your own systems for personally communicating with students, staff, and parents. For example, weekly staff emails allow for you to offer some encouragement, provide announcements, and free up precious staff meeting and in-service time. Engaging appropriately with young people on platforms like Snapchat or Tik Tok keeps you relevant and helps you gauge what your students are feeling and thinking. Handwritten notes and birthday cards infuse a personal touch to your leadership that those you serve will likely never forget. Beyond information sharing and personal notes, being approachable, available, and adept at actively listening are other essential instruments in your communication arsenal. These tools will help ensure lines of communication between you and those you serve are always open and 2-way. However you choose to personally communicate with those in your learning organization, be sure it is manageable, systemic, and consistent, so others know what to expect from you.

Nurturing your learning organization's culture through relationship-building and familiarizing yourself with your school's

systems provide a firm foundation for you to begin leading. However, there is another critical domain of school leadership that needs your attention in order to have a functioning learning organization. To round out the transition into your new position, you must start to gain insight into the learning taking place by both the students and adults in your school. We cover this next.

LEARNING

According to the School Leader Paradigm, school leaders support the development and use of innovative and equitable practices that encourage adult and student life-long learning. What does this look like for you as the learning leader of your school? Model the way by constantly reflecting on your own learning while simultaneously supporting the learning of students and adults. Fortunately for you, there is plenty of modeling to do since you have so much to learn about this new organization you are fortunate to lead. Like what we shared above with culture and systems, below you will find some information for you to begin reviewing, followed by additional thoughts about classroom visits to help you reflect and begin to formulate what must be done to improve outcomes for all members of your learning organization.

LEARNING: INFORMATION TO REVIEW

- Curriculum & Instruction Materials
- Student Assessment Program
- Student Assessment Data
- State Designation Data
- School Improvement Plan
- Student Grading Procedures
- MTSS Program
- Academic/Behavioral Intervention Plan
- Student Grades/D & F Lists
- Student Attendance
- Staff Assignment Master Schedule
- Class Rosters Staff Professional Development Program
- Staff Licensure Renewal Plan
- Staff Evaluation Plans and Instruments
- Schedule Informal Classroom Visits
- Schedule Formal Teacher Observations

CLASSROOM VISITS

While the items listed above will help you begin to build a picture of the learning taking place in your school, one of the higher leverage moves you can make to quickly build your understanding about learning is classroom visits. Additionally, nothing communicates that you value learning more than you being present in it. In other words, it is important for you to visit classrooms beyond what is required as a part of the formal teacher evaluation process. But before you set foot into one room, be sure you understand what the former practice has been for making such visits. If your predecessor chose not to routinely get it into classrooms, your teachers and students may be caught off guard. So, take time to check-in with those in your school, especially teachers, so you can develop and communicate messaging for both staff and students about what they can expect from your time in classrooms.

As you craft your messaging, assure teachers that the primary purpose for your visits is to focus on connections, celebrations and your own learning, not evaluation. Let teachers know that you are excited to see them in action and that you hope they will invite you in to observe the special work they are doing with students. As a leader entering into learning, be thinking about what you can immediately capture as strengths. What ways are students being engaged? What instructional moves are being made in response to student learning? What are students saying about learning to you? Importantly, develop a routine for how you will communicate feedback to teachers and students about what you experienced when visiting. They will definitely want to know your thoughts.

Up to this point, we have fleshed out the critical elements needed for you to effectively transition into your position as the leader of your learning organization. But beyond just using this period of entry to get to know people as well as learn the ins and outs of your school, this time of transition also affords you the opportunity to engage with the members of your learning organization in a unique way. These early days allow for you, right out the gate, to model how you are a learner and that you care deeply for those you serve. Further, you can use this time of entry to prepare yourself with what you need to move your learning organization forward. To assist you, we cover these important issues in the next two sections.

Public Entry Plan

As a school leader, you are a public figure. Obviously, you know this, but it does take some getting used to if you have never done it before. In your position, you must contend with a level of exposure and scrutiny not felt by teachers or other staff. With you being new, members of your learning organization will be watching what you do very closely. To help you communicate what others can expect from you as you get started, consider sharing a public entry plan with them. While you do not need to reveal every detail for what you hope to accomplish, being transparent and following-through with key elements of your plan will generate trust, model to others that you are a learner, and help members of your learning organization understand that you are serious about achieving what you have set out to do.

In the back, we have provided an example public entry plan you may want to use to assist you with crafting your own. The plan follows a logical format with an introductory message followed by three sections: Culture, Systems, and Learning. Under each section, concrete and measurable action steps are listed. Hopefully, the example template provided spurs some ideas for how you may want to approach your own plan.

If you do choose to create and disseminate a public entry plan for your transition, ensure it reflects your learning organization's unique context and any specific needs it may have, and coordinate with your superintendent (or district supervisor) the release of this entry plan. Also, routinely let the members of your learning organization know about your progress. Share what you are learning about your school, community, and its people. Emphasize the positive and be careful not to be overly critical during these early days unless you determine something is especially harmful to young people. Be ever mindful that a key reason for this exercise is to build credibility and relational capital with those you serve in order to move your learning organization forward in the weeks, months, and years to come.

The entry plan can also serve as the framework for an achievement record, allowing you to capture the growth and achievements of the team. Often, individual members of your team are not given the gift of seeing their work "as a whole," but rather they simply live through the day-to-day routines of school life without ever taking stock of the tremendous forward move-

LEADERSHIP ENTRY PLANNING: Essential to Successful Schools

Culture, Systems, & Learning Supports

What's currently available? (e.g., interventions, staffing, coaching, family and community partnerships, unique expertise, additional initiatives)



What are the culture, systems, and learning practices right now? What does the data tell me? (e.g., What are student, family, and staff perceptions? What are student outcomes? What practices are we using?)

★ Current Reality (You are here!)

Preferred Future

What is our collective vision? (e.g., What will it look like? How will we define it for students, families, and staff? What will success look like? Who is involved?)

What are our perceived barriers? (e.g., Mindset, buy-in, instructional knowledge, resources, master scheduling, collaboration and partnerships.)

Culture, Systems, and Learning Supports

ment that has likely been accomplished. Producing an interim or annual report that can be shared will serve to recognize the team for its collective work.

Looking Ahead

So, what is ahead? As we have discussed, intentional entry and transition into your new position provides an opportunity for you to develop critical relationships with those in your learning organization as well as intentionally discover your school's culture, systems, and learning. Clearly, these are necessary for you to have a successful start. What we have not yet considered, though, is how the approach you take to your entry can also greatly enhance your visioning and planning for your learning organization's future.

After a sufficient period of getting to know others and learn how your school operates, you will want to begin turning your efforts to those focused on growth and improvement. To support your work, be sure to capture your observations right from the beginning. The Notes section in the back of this document provides questions to spur reflection along with space to collect your thoughts.

To assist you with moving from thought to action, the grid above will help you begin to assess your current reality, available supports, barriers to progress, and a possible path to your preferred future. A larger version of this grid is available on page 27 for you to write in or duplicate. With this assessment in hand, you will have a powerful resource at your disposal to start conversing with members of your learning organization about your collective vision for the future and what it will take for all of you to achieve it. Now, the opportunity for real impact begins!

Final Thoughts

Let us end where we started. Leadership is a journey, and the purpose of this resource is to encourage and equip you so you begin your journey well. With a solid start, it is our hope that you will garner the credibility and relational capital you need to work with the members of your learning organization to move your school forward and do what is best for your students. Never forget that you are not alone on this journey. Please contact us here at the Pennsylvania Principals Association by calling 717-732-4999 or visiting our website at www.papincipals.org if there is ever anything we can do to support you. Best of luck!

ENDNOTES

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SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM

Becoming...

PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Wellness

Ethical
Fit/Healthy
Optimistic
Self-aware

Self Management

Organized
Balanced
Self-controlled
Self-confident

Growth Mindset

Humble
Reflective
Intentional
Accountable

Innovation

Creative
Adaptive
Resilient
Courageous

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Service

Empathetic
Trustworthy
Generous
Protective

Capacity Building

Empowering
Guiding
Resourceful
Facilitative

Community Building

Relational
Collaborative
Connective
Conciliatory

Influence

Attentive
Communicative
Motivational
Catalytic

SYSTEMS INTELLIGENCE

Mission/Vision/ Strategic Planning

Analytic
Strategic
Articulate
Visionary

Teaching & Learning

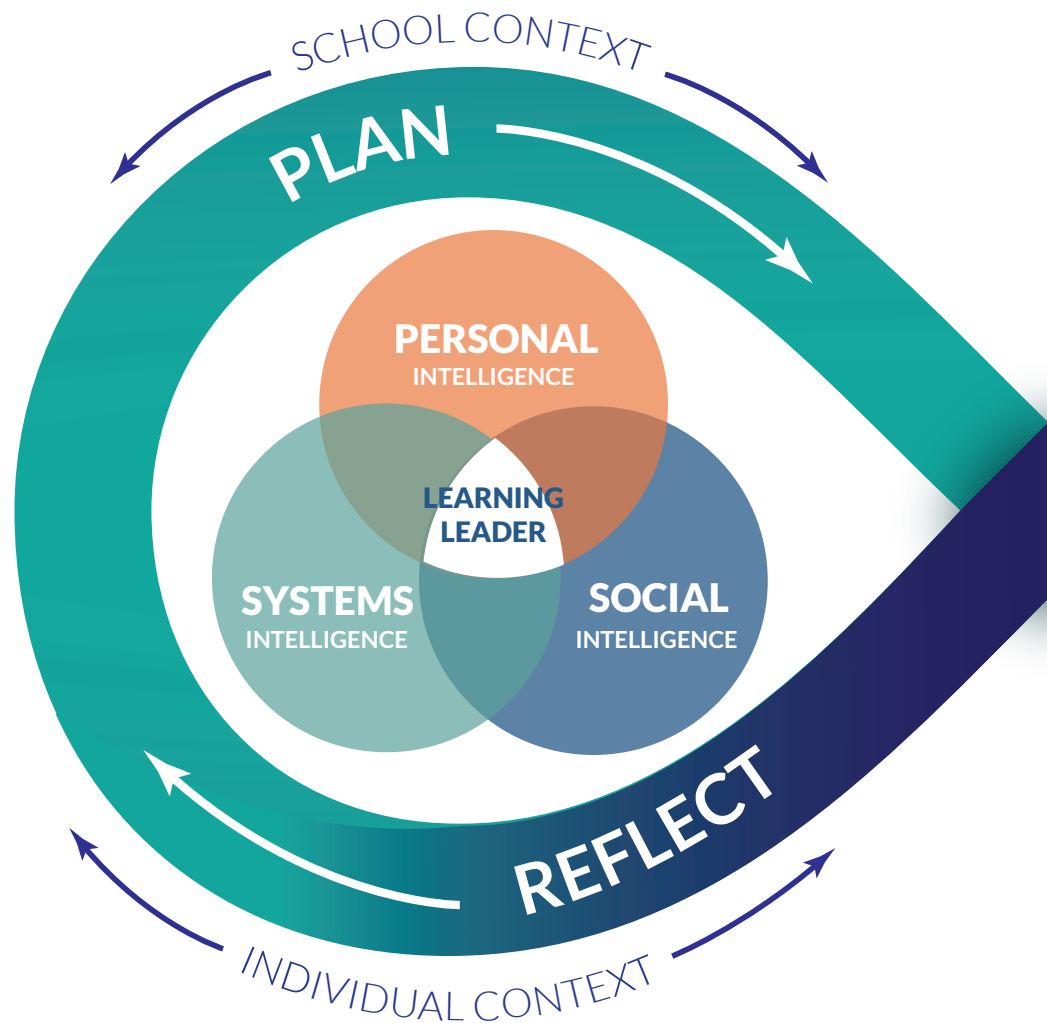
Diagnostic
Knowledgeable
Pedagogic
Evaluative

Operations & Management

Responsible
Transformative
Responsive
Methodical

Cultural Responsiveness

Visible
Affiliative
Advocative
Global

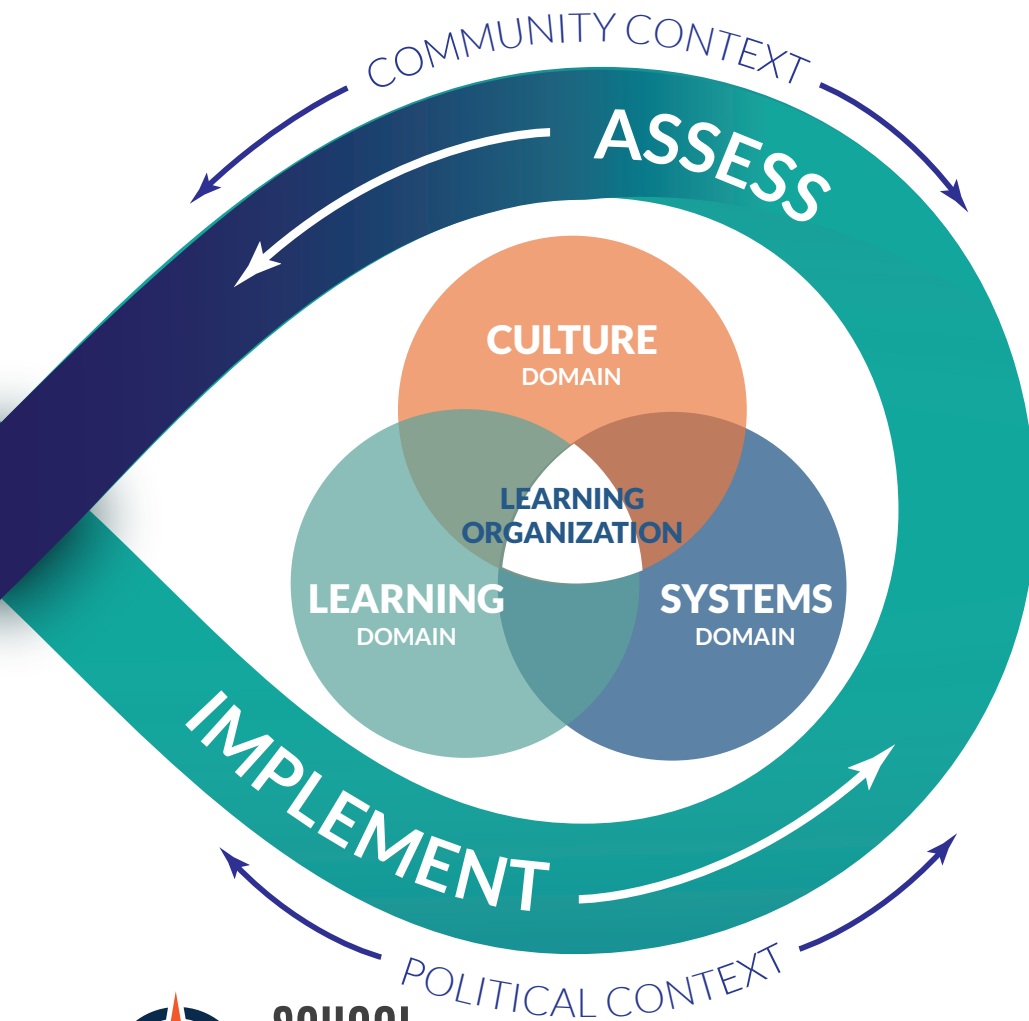


Creating Hope for All
#CreateHope

“BECOMING” GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to be a Learning Leader?
2. What are your Leadership Intelligences? How do these intelligences impact your ability to lead?
3. How aware are you of the contexts in which you lead? How does your leadership intelligence impact your contextual effectiveness?
4. How effective are you in leading constant Cycles of Inquiry? What attributes make you more or less effective?

... while Doing



CULTURE DOMAIN

- Relationships
- Student Centeredness
- Wellness
- Equity
- Traditions/Celebrations
- Ethics
- Global Mindedness

SYSTEMS DOMAIN

- Vision/Mission
- Communication
- Collaborative Leadership
- Data Literacy
- Strategic Management
- Safety
- Operations

LEARNING DOMAIN

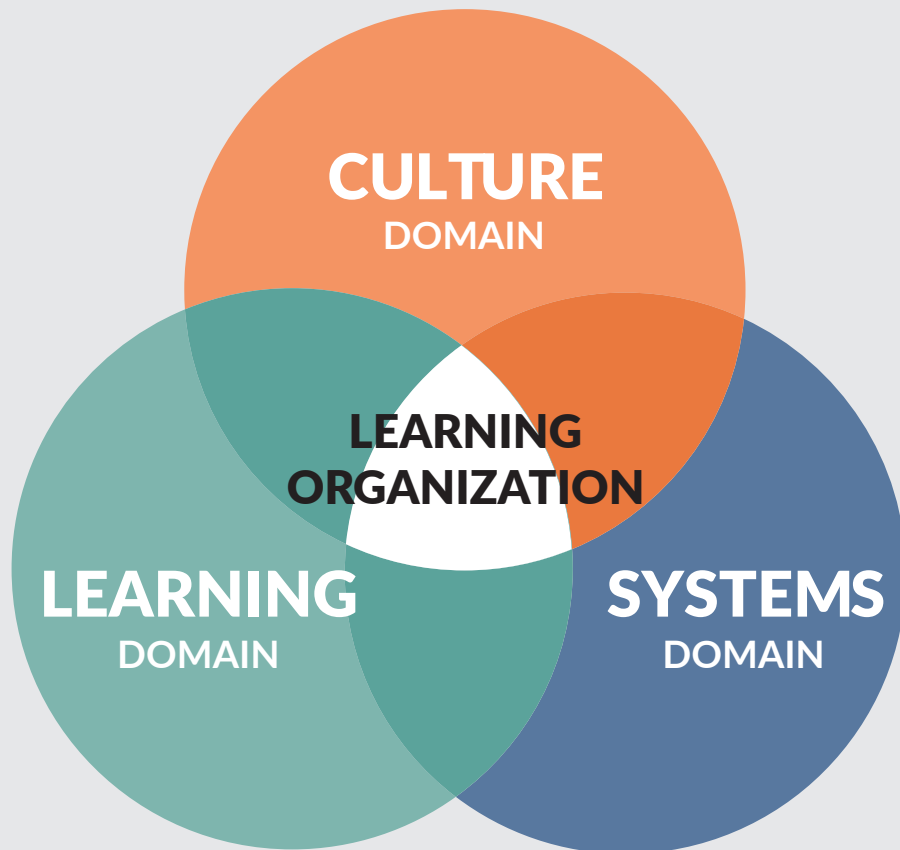
- Reflection/Growth
- Result-Oriented
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Innovation
- Human Capital Management



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“DOING” GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. How are **you** leading the learning of your learning organization?
2. What are you doing to create culture with your students, staff and school community? What attributes increase your effectiveness at leading culture?
3. What systems are supporting and/or eroding your culture and what are you doing to be a systems leader? What attributes make you an effective systems leader?
4. How are you pushing on leading learning for all stakeholders? What attributes make you an effective “Lead Learner”?



**Hillcrest Middle School
Jaimie Mendoza
Entry Plan**

Purpose and Vision

The purpose of this entry plan is to establish and communicate the goals and activities necessary to ensure a smooth and successful transition of Jamie Mendoza as the Principal of Hillcrest Middle School (HMS). In addition, this plan helps articulate my beliefs about what steps are important to ensure the continued success of this learning organization.

HMS has a rich history of commitment to its students, its staff, and its community. It is my goal to not only honor these traditions, but to continue to foster an environment that recognizes and encourages the contributions and achievements of both students and staff. In collaboration with all stakeholders, it is my intention to make HMS one of the state's leading schools.

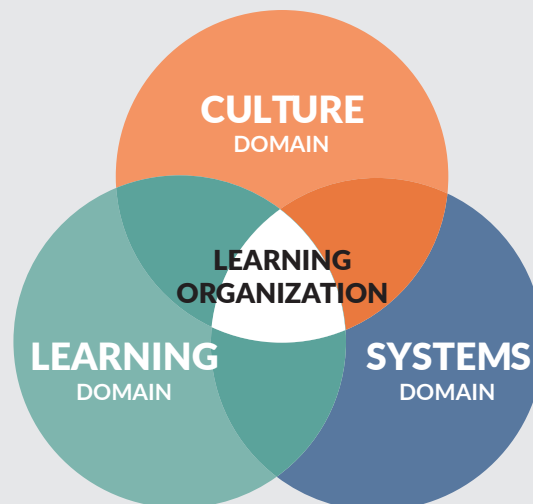
I believe that we must empower every child. To do so, we must filter our choices through a lens that places student needs first and considers the following question essential in the decision-making process:

"Is this decision based on what is right for students?"

This entry plan has three primary goals:

- Goal 1 (Culture): Promote a positive, collaborative culture throughout the HMS learning organization.
- Goal 2 (Systems): Gain a working knowledge of the HMS learning organization's systems.
- Goal 3 (Learning): Promote academic excellence and increased student and adult performance.

The pages that follow outline my objectives and activities aligned to the three goals above. You will receive regular updates from me on my progress including a "state of the school" report early during the second semester detailing what I have learned during my transition.



Goal 1 (Culture)

Promote a positive, collaborative culture throughout the HMS learning organization.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish positive and productive relationships with members of the learning organization.
- Get to know each staff person individually.
- Promote a sense of collaboration and mutual respect.
- Support the work of students and adults.
- Recognize and reward outstanding effort, service, and achievement.
- Understand the community served by the HMS learning organization.

ACTIVITIES

- Prepare an introductory email/message for members of the HMS learning organization.
- Plan for the year's "firsts" – first faculty meeting, first day of school, etc.
- Consider team-building activities that you may use to kick off the school year.
- Review available culture data
- Begin to establish relationships and lines of communication by meeting with members of the HMS learning organization:
 - Staff
 - Students
 - Parents
 - Key Community Leaders
- Establish regular meeting times with the following staff:
 - Administrative Assistant
 - Leadership Team
 - Maintenance Team
 - Food Service Team
- Plan and organize beginning of the year activities with staff, students, parents, and community leaders. Ensure activities are relevant, meaningful, fun, and honor school traditions.
- Schedule home visits.
- Attend athletic and extracurricular activities.
- Attend key community events and activities.
- Recognize staff and students regularly through multiple channels – notes, social media, newspaper, school board meetings, etc.

Goal 2 (Systems)

Gain a working knowledge of the HMS learning organization's systems.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop communication system to ensure school information is regularly shared with all members of the HMS learning organization.
- Establish open lines of communication with members of the HMS learning organization.
- Ensure school safety procedures are current.
- Ensure school facility and grounds are maintained and not in need of significant repair.
- Understand the current philosophy, condition, and challenges of the learning organization.

ACTIVITIES

- Review the school's website, social media accounts, and newsletters.
- Plan for routine school updates, information sharing, and storytelling using the school's website, social media accounts, automated calling system, and newsletters.
- Plan for onboarding new staff.
- Review the school's safety and emergency procedures.
- Review security of the school facility and visitor entry procedures.
- Take a walking tour of the school facility and grounds with the head of maintenance. Locate emergency shutoffs.
- Ride morning and afternoon bus routes.
- Eat routinely in the cafeteria.
- Review the school's documents including:
 - School Vision/Mission/Beliefs
 - School Improvement Plan
 - Student/Parent Handbooks
 - Master Class Schedule
 - Athletics and Activities Schedules
 - Building Budget
 - Current Negotiated School Employee Contracts
- Review student demographic information.
- Review student attendance data.
- Review student discipline data.

Goal 3 (Learning)

Promote academic excellence and increased student and adult performance.

OBJECTIVES

- Analyze local and state assessment data to identify achievement gaps between student groups and grade levels.
- Review the district's curriculum.
- Identify and assess the effectiveness of promising practices in the district.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the school's teacher and staff evaluation systems.

ACTIVITIES

- Disaggregate and review state report card data for the past five years.
- Identify positive and negative trends in achievement.
- Evaluate the monitoring processes for existing programs and promising practices that has been initiated.
- Review curriculum and instruction materials.
- Review the assessment system (formative, summative)
- Review the MTSS plan.
- Review any behavior intervention plans.
- Review established building committees.
- Review existing family engagement plans.
- Review teacher and staff evaluation tools and processes.
- Communicate with teachers about the purpose for classroom visits and the intent for them to be positive and constructive.
- Visit all classrooms by the end of the first week of school.
- Review staff professional development program.

RESOURCE: NOTES

INFLUENCERS

Did any names of students, staff, and/or community members come up as ones who are doing particularly meaningful work for young people or who are viewed as key influencers?

TRADITIONS & CELEBRATIONS

What can be done to start the school year in a fun and productive way?

EQUITY

Do any groups of students, staff, or community members perceive that they are not served equitably by my learning organization? Why?

SYSTEMS

COMMUNICATION

Is critical information shown on the school's website (school calendar, schedules, teacher contact information, etc.) current and easy to find? Does the school have a social media presence? If so, is it active? What tools will I utilize to personally connect with students, staff, and parents? What will I do to make sure I communicate regularly with students, staff, and parents?

GOVERNANCE & PLANNING

How current are the learning organization's vision, mission, and strategic plan? Are student/parent handbooks current? What is the demographic make-up of my student body (gender, race, socio-economic, special education, etc.)?

FINANCES

Have all building and classroom supplies been delivered for the start of the school year? What is the process for setting the building budget? Who is involved with setting the building budget? Are all Title and other grants current with deadlines met?

RESOURCE: NOTES

SCHOOL FACILITIES

What is the condition of the school facilities and equipment? Does anything need immediate attention?

SAFETY

Are school safety and emergency plans current? Is the facility adequately secure? Do visitor entry procedures promote student and staff safety?

LABOR RELATIONS

What is the current state of the relationship between the collective bargaining unit and school leadership? If tensions exist, what is the specific source of those tensions?

FOOD SERVICE

What is the condition of the kitchen and eating areas? Do students like the food being served to them? Does the food balance nutrition, taste, and cost? Do food service staff promote a positive school culture?

TRANSPORTATION

Are buses and other transports clean and in good working order? Do bus routes minimize the time students ride the bus? Do bus drivers and transportation staff promote a positive school culture?

EQUITY

Does student attendance and discipline data reveal any disparities between various student groups based on gender, race, socio-economics, etc.?

RESOURCE: NOTES

LEARNING

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION MATERIALS

What is the district's adopted pacing guides and materials? Are these in use in classrooms? What other materials are in use?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM AND DATA

What are the assessments that are used in my building? Is there a district assessment guide and calendar? Am I the coordinator or is this centralized? What am I noticing and wondering on student data that is available? Is both quantitative and qualitative data used?

STATE DESIGNATION/SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

What is my school's current accountability designation? What led to the current designation? Is my learning organization's school improvement plan current and actively driving improvement efforts?

STUDENT GRADES/D & F LISTS

What students are showing up? As I disaggregate by race, gender, ethnicity, programing such as English Language Learner or students who receive support in Special Education, is there disproportionality? What are the current grading practices in the building and district?

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLAN

Are student discipline policies current? Do student discipline procedures adequately provide for restoration (academic, SEL, etc.) back into the learning organization? Is student discipline administered equitably?

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Does my school have supports for attendance? What is the district and school policy? Is the data on student attendance illustrating disproportionality and/or intersectionality with other areas such as grades?

RESOURCE: NOTES

SCHEDULE INFORMAL CLASSROOM VISITS

What is the school communities experience with these? How have I communicated to students and staff the purpose and expectations?

SCHEDULE FORMAL TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

What is the current status of my teachers? What has been the past practice for formal observations? How will I communicate my plan?

STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

What is the current staffing assignment? Are there openings and do they need to be filled? Are the current placements meeting student's learning needs? What does the CBA say regarding staffing?

MASTER SCHEDULE

Who has historically created the schedule? Are there expectations from the district around scheduling? Does the schedule afford students the most time in grade level learning? Is there equitable access to classes?

CLASS ROSTERS

Who and how are these developed?

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

What are the current structures in place for professional learning? Is there content and expectations from central office or can I develop my own? What is the current feeling from staff around adult learning?

LEADERSHIP ENTRY PLANNING: Essential to Successful Schools

Culture, Systems, & Learning Supports

What's currently available? (e.g., interventions, staffing, coaching, family and community partnerships, unique expertise, additional initiatives)



What are the culture, systems, and learning practices right now? What does the data tell me? (e.g., What are student, family, and staff perceptions? What are student outcomes? What practices are we using?)



Current Reality (You are here!)

Preferred Future

What is our collective vision? (e.g., What will it look like? How will we define it for students, families, and staff? What will success look like? Who is involved?)



What are our perceived barriers? (e.g., Mindset, buy-in, instructional knowledge, resources, master scheduling, collaboration and partnerships.)

Culture, Systems, and Learning Supports



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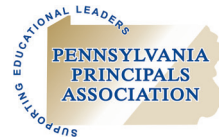
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