

Entry Plan



Dr. Carol D. Birks
Superintendent
Chester Upland School District
July 1, 2020





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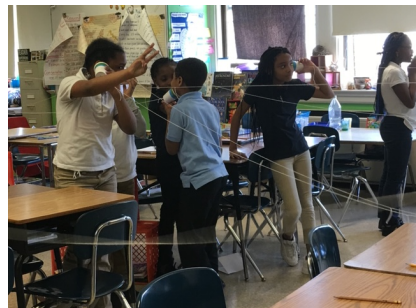
Christina Delva

Dear Chester Upland School District Learning Community:

The vision for Chester Upland School District is to ensure that students graduate from high school ready for college and/ or a career in spite of any and all challenges. The incoming Superintendent for the Chester Upland School District will have the challenge and the unique opportunity to listen and learn, utilizing the Entry Planning process, and to assess how the schools are working toward meeting the district's goals and vision for school improvement. The Entry Planning approach is a researched-based framework, designed to counter the forces that trigger unilateral rather than collaborative decision-making. The approach is a sequenced set of activities that assist the new leader in building trust and does so by confronting complexities and by leading organizations in producing the collective new thinking required for successful change efforts. (Jentz,1980).

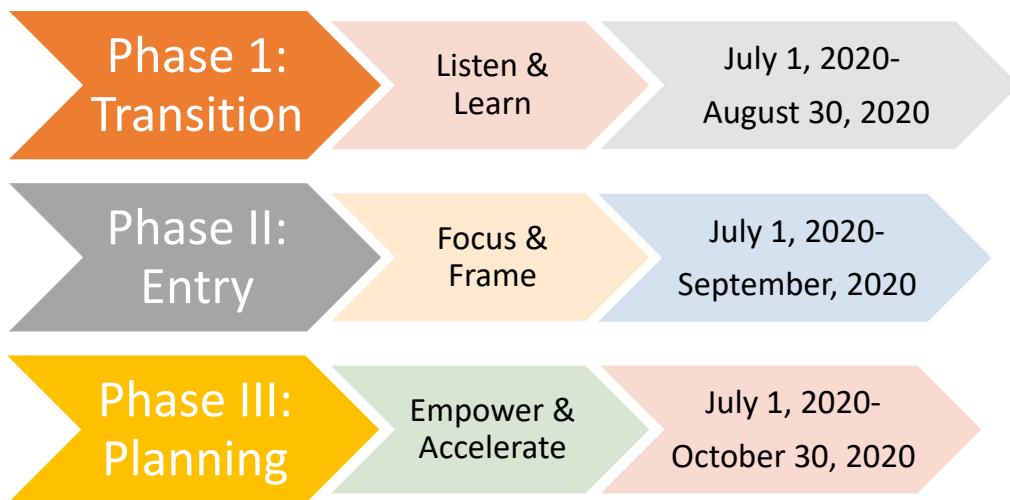
Three questions must be addressed throughout the first 90 days of this plan and throughout the remainder of the 2020-2021 academic year: (1) What beliefs, structures, and practices must be collectively embraced and operationalized by all stakeholders in order to ensure that Chester Upland's core values of putting children first is evident throughout the school district and the overall learning community? (2) How do we know if students are learning? (3) How will the community work collaboratively to embrace the vision of the incoming Superintendent and continue to move the district's schools along a path of continuous improvement and thus ensure that all schools are viewed as high-performing schools that provide equity, diversity and access for students and educators?

This 90-day Draft Entry Plan is designed to quickly gather information about Chester Upland School District. It will also provide Dr. Carol D. Birks with a framework to engage multiple stakeholders and key constituents in an intentional, purposeful, and strategic transition of leadership to Chester Upland School District. This plan will begin to assess the strengths and areas of growth of the organizational culture, systems and practices; create a sense of urgency; determine quick wins; and identify key priorities as we transition our educational system during these unprecedented times in the world's history.





This Entry Plan is steeped in a three-pronged inquiry approach that will guide our thinking and identify goals, outcomes, and actions to influence a complex system focused on continuous improvement, talent management and development. The phases include the following: (1) Transition: (Pre-Entry), Listen and Learn; (2) Entry: Focus and Frame, and (3) Planning: Empower and Accelerate.



Phases

Phase I: Listen & Learn - Conduct listening and learning tours to include one-on-one meetings and focus groups with various stakeholders, including, students, families, teachers, administrators, staff, community, elected officials, collective bargaining union leaders, corporations and philanthropic community to get to know them and to gain their perspectives on the following: (1) What are the strengths of Chester Public Schools? (2) What are the areas of growth? (3) What do we need to start doing? (4) What do we need to stop doing? (5) What gifts and talents will you contribute to help lead Chester Public Schools on a path of continuous improvement? (6) If you were superintendent, what would you do first?



Phases

Phase II: Focus & Frame - Conduct targeted document review of Chester Upland School District's *Revised Financial Recovery Plan*, *District Level Plan* and school continuous improvement plans, collective bargaining agreements, teacher and administrator evaluation processes, and school board policies. Review existing and proposed initiatives to promote diversity and equity throughout schools and District. Conduct a deep dive of student academic outcomes of school districts throughout the state, tenure and demographic make-up of educators, and other quantitative and qualitative data points. Target key patterns in performance, beliefs, operations, systems, structures and practices, and present those findings to stakeholders.

Phase III: Empower & Accelerate - Enable action by building on the strengths of the organization, including human capital to build capacity in our schools. Remove barriers to form a change vision that is strategic and systemic that puts students at the center of learning and further engage families toward academic excellence. Inspire innovation and a dual operating system to create strategies for organizational coherence, alignment, and development.

The remainder of the Entry Plan will briefly describe the phases of the plan and identify thinking and acting on a complex system focused on building on the past to lead to large scale improvement. It will include the Plan's goals and a 90-day plan that includes goals, outcomes, and actions as related to the community structure of the Governance Team, Student Achievement, Organizational Capacity and Alignment: Senior Leadership, Operations and Finance, and Cultivating Community Partnerships.



This Entry Plan is designed to address the following goals:

- Serve as a learning strategy to establish transformational urgency by honoring and building on current practices.
- Establish and foster a productive, trusting, and collaborative Governance Model with the The Receiver and Chester Upland Board of Education.
- Proactively enlist the voices of multiple stakeholders, not just those who typically collaborate with the school district and include them in the process of continuous improvement.
- Cultivate public trust, commitment, and confidence through transparent, clear, and open communication with all stakeholders.
- Assess systemic structures, operational processes, and policies to gain a more thorough understanding of Chester Upland School District.
- Conduct a needs assessment of the district’s learning and teaching, fiscal operations, human capital management, organizational systems, and design, pre the COVID-19 pandemic and the current state of the district.
- Gain greater understanding of the hopes and needs from a wide variety of internal and external perspectives to identify emergent themes and key priorities.



Desired Outcome: To establish and promote effective district governance by building a productive and collaborative relationships with the Receiver and Board of Education.

30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Share the Entry Plan for feedback, suggestions, and guidance with the Receiver and Board of Education.</p> <p>Establish regular one-on-one meetings with Receiver.</p> <p>Schedule Retreat with Receiver Chief Financial Recovery Officer and Board of Education regarding updates of possible actions and strategies as related to the most current <i>Financial Recovery Plan</i> and <i>District Level Plan</i>.</p> <p>Engage in one-on-one meetings with the Board of Education to deepen relationships and to broaden perspectives.</p> <p>Meet with elected officials and determine how we will work in partnership with the school district and Board of Education.</p> <p>Establish one on one meeting with Receiver, and Board Chairperson for reviewing and constructing agendas.</p>	<p>Schedule meeting with Chester Upland’s Teacher Association’s leadership to build relationships and clarity of understanding of leadership vision and theory of action.</p> <p>Conduct breakfast/lunch/dinner meetings with the Receiver, Board of Education members, Chief Recovery Officer and with elected officials to continue to build positive and productive relationships.</p> <p>Conduct Retreat with Receiver, Chief Financial Recovery Officer and Board of Education members.</p> <p>Provide updates to the Receiver Chief Financial Recovery Officer and the Board of Education of strategies taken by the Superintendent and Executive Staff regarding the recommendations noted in the <i>Revised Financial Recovery Plan</i> for the general and capital budgets, hiring, learning and teaching and policy and regulation revisions and development.</p>	<p>Develop a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and communication systems to promote effective and positive working relationships with the Board of Education.</p> <p>Schedule second Retreat with Receiver and Board of Education.</p> <p>Develop a process, structure, and timeline to measure current <i>District Level Plan</i> and <i>Revised Financial Recovery Plan</i>, school continuous improvement plans, and the school district’s budget.</p> <p>Ensure that the Superintendent, Receiver, Chief Recovery Officer and Board Members have predetermined means of communication.</p> <p>Provide updates to the Receiver, Chief Financial Recovery Officer and the Board of Education regarding progress on <i>Financial Recovery Plan</i> and operational recommendations.</p>



Student Achievement/Talent Management & Development

Desired Outcome: Ensure that the academic program is designed so that students are prepared for college, careers and life beyond high school. Ensure instruction is occurring at high levels and that teachers have access to rigorous K-12 instructional curriculum, processes, and tools to monitor students' progress, and opportunities and resources to provide appropriate interventions.

30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Convene COVID-19 Transition Task Force to develop academic programming, interventions, and social emotional learning supports.</p> <p>Work with schools to convene school level pandemic committees.</p> <p>Develop Communication's Plan to transition back to school.</p> <p>Review <i>Mass Insights Report</i> and instructional audits and determine follow-up action steps.</p> <p>Analyze patterns in student achievement data and achievement gaps to evaluate the current state of learning and teaching.</p> <p>Meet with Assessment Office staff for briefings on students in the district, including special populations.</p>	<p>Meet with student focus groups to learn about their schooling experiences.</p> <p>Analyze patterns in student achievement data and achievement gaps to evaluate learning and teaching.</p> <p>Schedule meetings with Chester Upland Educational Association's leadership, elected officials, and union representatives for administrators and support staff, to forge relationships and partnerships to improve academic outcomes and identify student and staffs' needs.</p> <p>Review and assess professional learning offerings for principals, teachers, and central office staff; determine the degree to which opportunities are job-embedded, differentiated and student achievement directed.</p>	<p>Identify chronically underperforming schools and initiate root-cause analysis of why they are not meeting the needs of students; determine a course of action.</p> <p>Establish a protocol to review the instructional program, practices, curriculum and support materials for evidence of effectiveness in improving student achievement and closing the gap between all student populations.</p> <p>Review and analyze the district's current evaluation systems for effectiveness and accountability.</p> <p>Review and visit 100 percent of classrooms with principals to develop a common academic language and focus on instruction.</p>



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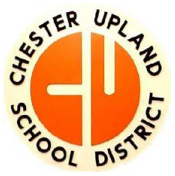
30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Meet with school Instructional Leadership Teams to review achievement data, individualized learning goals, and adaptive challenges to assess learning, teaching, vision, values, and organizational systems and structures as part of the listen and learn phase.</p> <p>Review academic programs, including instructional technology to determine use and blended learning opportunities and assess impact on student outcomes.</p> <p>Meet with the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum for updates, and plans as noted in the <i>Financial Recovery Plan and District Plan</i>.</p>	<p>Review district programming for special populations, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and high performing learners.</p> <p>Meet with the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum for information, updates, and plans as noted in the <i>Financial Recovery Plan and District Plan</i>.</p> <p>Develop Individualized Plans for staff to include ways to support their professional and social emotional learning needs.</p>	<p>Provide updates to Receiver regarding status of academic and social emotional learning progress as noted in <i>Financial Recovery Plan and District Plan</i>.</p>



Organizational Capacity and Alignment: Senior Leadership Team and Central Office

<i>Desired Outcome: To increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency and ensure high performance and support to schools.</i>		
30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Administer the <i>Gallup Strengths Finders</i> and/or the <i>TTI Emotional Quotient</i> to gain a more objective perspective of Senior Leadership Team members' strengths. Establish meetings with Senior Leadership Team and district departments including the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education Department, and ELL Department, as part of the Listen and Learn phase of the plan.</p> <p>Request briefing papers from all Senior Leadership, particularly as related to the recommendations in the <i>Financial Recovery Plan</i> and <i>District Level Plan</i> asking for overviews of their current areas of responsibility, COVID-19 response, major initiatives under way with projected timelines, a review of significant or potential problems in each area of responsibility, and major decisions to be made in one month, three months, and six months.</p>	<p>Conduct a retreat with Senior Leadership Team to review and receive updates per department as related to the <i>Financial Recovery Plan</i>, the <i>District Level Plan</i> improvement plan, recent achievement data, current or anticipated vacancies in central office or principalships and discuss leadership team structures and practices.</p> <p>Determine how communication and decision making will occur with Senior Leadership Team, establishing meeting protocols and systems designed to focus on increase student achievement and continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Initiate plans to establish or review key metrics and service goals for each functional unit to ensure the performance of central office can be determined and measured in alignment with core function and support for student achievement.</p> <p>Plan a second retreat with Senior Leadership Team to review accountability plans for all functional units, clarify process and progress toward improvement with strategic plan and district improvement plan, set clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, expectations and systems for mutual accountability, and review current and future budget issues and current organizational structures.</p>

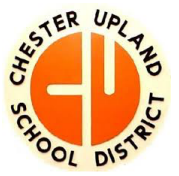
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30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Conduct one-on-one interviews and review resumes and briefing papers with all direct reports.</p> <p>Review functions around finding the best staff and initiate an audit of the Talent Management Office.</p> <p>Meet with District’s Chief Operating officer and Finance Team about the <i>Financial Recovery Report</i> and the 2020-21 general and capital budgets.</p>	<p>Review all critical documents, including the organizational chart, employee handbooks, policy and procedure manuals, the strategic plan, and student achievement data by school.</p> <p>Lead a productive administrative retreat that focuses on unity, goal setting, and district mission and vision and transitioning students, families, and staff back to school.</p> <p>Develop productive two-day in-service prior to the students’ first day of school.</p> <p>Continue meetings with Chief Recovery Officer, Receiver and financial officials regarding the <i>Financial Recovery Report</i> and the 2020-21 general and capital budgets.</p>	<p>Assess current accountability measures and determine data to be collected, examined and analyzed at quarter, mid-year, and end of year reviews; also examine quality control measures about the release of data.</p> <p>Develop goals with principals and all Central Office administrators.</p> <p>Continue meetings with the District’s chief financial official regarding the <i>Financial Recovery Report</i> and Receiver regarding 2020-2021 budget.</p>



<i>Desired Outcome: Restructure the District’s Central Services and develop a cohesive unit committed to accomplishment of our shared vision.</i>		
30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Meet with Operations Team to review facilities to ensure that schools are clean and safe for occupancy and aligned with health and safety protocols to address COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Review school budgets and conduct one-on-one meetings with direct reports and principals to review budget, operations, and human capital.</p> <p>Schedule regular meeting time with Chief Recovery Officer.</p> <p>Review <i>Master Plan</i> and discuss immediate operational needs including facilities.</p> <p>Review operational briefing papers and determine strengths, gaps and readiness for school opening.</p> <p>Review and build on Recruitment, Hiring and Retention Plan and secure key staff to prepare for school opening.</p>	<p>Conduct one-on-one meetings with all office leads, ensuring that departments determine their support to schools.</p> <p>Develop a maintenance checklist, strategies, and reporting structure to advise Receiver, Board of Education and all stakeholders of status of schools and all facilities.</p> <p>Analyze fiscal resources and programs and develop a protocol that measures and analyzes success to determine appropriate levels of equity and access across the system.</p> <p>Meet with Chief Recovery Officer to identify unfunded items needed to support transition back to school.</p> <p>Analyze the budget to determine allocations for and the assessment of professional development.</p> <p>Continue one-on-one meetings with legal counsel and with Special Education staff to review and to discuss current legal proceedings and recommendations, as noted in the <i>Financial Recovery Plan</i>.</p>	<p>Review the district’s financial projections, resource allocation and budgeting process; assess how the district’s budget and budgeting process are aligned to support student achievement.</p> <p>Conduct one-on-one meetings with legal representatives to review current legal proceedings and compliance for special populations as noted in <i>Financial Recovery Plan</i>.</p>



Desired Outcome: Build public trust, social capital and confidence through open and transparent communication, and foster positive relationships.		
30-days	60-days	90-days
<p>Use Listen & Learn community events to introduce Dr. Birks to the community and to gain the community’s perspectives on the current state of the school district and to respond to stakeholders’ questions.</p> <p>Hold Community Forums/ Coffee Conversations as part of the Listen and Learn phase.</p> <p>Enlist support of community and families to assist with transitioning back to school.</p> <p>Meet with the Mayor and elected officials to identify ways to leverage city resources to assist with academic programming and transitioning to 2020-2021 school opening.</p>	<p>Contact a multitude of stakeholders and establish routine meetings, communication protocols, and reciprocal dialogues, focusing on increasing student achievement and continuous improvement; initiate open, honest, and transparent dialogues with the goal of strengthening and improving strategic partnerships.</p> <p>Meet with parent groups to engage them in conversation and support district and school improvement.</p> <p>Meet with Mayor and elected officials to identify ways to leverage city resources to assist with academic programming.</p>	<p>Hold community forums/Coffee Conversations as part of the Listen & Learn phase.</p> <p>Meet with select corporate partners, nonprofit organization leaders, and elected officials to build relationships and to enlist support for schools.</p> <p>Identify private funding and grant opportunities for schools.</p> <p>Provide updates via social media and other electronic formats to share lessons learned, status of schools and our way forward.</p> <p>Develop Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council (SPAC).</p>



At the conclusion of this Entry Plan, the first 90 days of my tenure as Superintendent, I would have listened to and learned, built relationships, and had conversations about the beliefs, structures, and practices of our learning community that will guide our school improvement efforts.

Such learning will facilitate a transparent summary of findings, decision making in practice, and opportunities to accelerate continuous improvement. By identifying the strengths of the organization and additional learning, we will multiply our opportunities to improve student outcomes.

This Entry Plan is the foundation for our New Beginning. It will guide us in discovering solutions, implementing best practices, and accelerating progress. This plan provides strategies for interventions, remediation, and enrichment. Moreover, the strategies and actions described in this document will assist us in preparing students to be 21st century learners and teaching the whole child, often referred to in Chester Upland Public School District as students mastering Quad A (Academics, Arts, Athletics, and Activities).



Quad A's

- Academics
- Activities
- Arts
- Athletics



