



LAKEWOOD
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent Engagement Plan

“The soul wants truth, not trivia. So if the space between us is to welcome the soul, it must be a space in which truth can be told.”

*--Parker Palmer from *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life**

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Purpose

Transitioning leadership in public education must be a deliberate process that allows a new superintendent to integrate into the culture of the community. It is a time of listening, learning and seeking to understand what is true to people. A purposeful engagement plan creates a roadmap that highlights the conversations and questions shaping the nascent relationships that will mature over time.

This leadership engagement plan allows me, as the new superintendent, to start building relationships and to ascertain the successes and challenges that are already part of Lakewood's story. It also provides an opportunity to understand the aspirations and goals of the students, staff and community—to begin to see the outline of the story that we have yet to write together. Through team building, collaboration, community dialogues and conversation the transition period provides time needed to identify immediate needs, formulate next steps and refine goals that support the growth of schools and district as a learning organization—a learning organization that shapes and is shaped by the community it serves. By extension, such time and collaboration provide an opportunity to refine systems that support the social-emotional and academic needs of the students at the heart of community.

A well-executed engagement plan helps to navigate the uncertainty that comes with a change of leadership. It balances the need for the new superintendent to address emergent, short-term questions or issues within the context of daily relationships, leveraging opportunities to discuss what is most important in the moment with those people who will be part of the long-term vision. It presumes that important decisions (which always have to be made in a timely manner) engage, formally or informally, the people who are most impacted by them.

Through the leadership of the Board, dedication of the staff and the support of the community, I hope that my transition will serve as an opportunity to foster communal and professional reflection, articulate shared commitments to growth, and, most importantly, to build a vision of what we want to create in Lakewood for students.

Leading the Lakewood community by building relationships that are grounded in curiosity and caring, that cultivate a sense of belonging for each student in service to their social, emotional and intellectual growth.

Domain 1: District Leadership and Governance

- **OBJECTIVE:** Enhance a cohesive leadership and governance framework in which the Superintendent, Board and Cabinet fulfill their respective roles with confidence, integrity and transparency. In service to this goal, the Superintendent will:
 - Meet with Directors both individually and as a team to deepen relationships, understand their aspirations for the district, and strengthen the dialogue that clarifies a shared vision for the school district
 - Establish a regular meeting time with the Board President and Vice President
 - Plan the first Board Retreat with an agenda aimed at establishing commitments, roles and responsibilities, engaging in self-assessment, drafting Board goals for the school year, and continuing conversations about the relationships between Board priorities, budget and levies
 - Develop timely and meaningful communication avenues between the Board and the Superintendent
 - Support Cabinet in the organization and presentation of information at Board meetings, as well as in the follow-up to Board requests
 - Highlight for the Board the nature and content of Cabinet administrators' contributions to recommendations and district-level decisions
 - Cultivate in Cabinet a clear understanding of the needs and expectations of the Board in their role as elected representatives of the community
 - Review roles and responsibilities of the Cabinet administrators with a focus on cohesion and collaborative support

- Support the establishment of a Superintendent evaluation process, procedures, timelines and goals

Domain 2: Student Growth and Support

- **OBJECTIVE:** Support a culture in which all conversations and decisions pertaining to leadership development, professional growth and day-to-day needs center around their impact on students' social, emotional and intellectual growth. In service to this goal, the Superintendent will:
 - Engage with students at school events and activities, particularly leadership and service activities
 - Spend time with students: school board student advisors, student leaders, participants in leadership, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
 - Include students as full participants in the Lakewood Community Café (October 9, 2019)
 - Support and encourage the integration of social-emotional priorities (and professional learning) within the district's focus on student engagement
 - Engage with staff and administration in monitoring growth in building and district initiatives in literacy, social-emotional learning, math and science
 - Adhere in word and deed to the notion that we are data-informed and relationship-driven
 - Identify with Teaching and Learning and principals the student learning information most relevant to monitoring student growth
 - In collaboration with the Administrative Leadership Team identify how resources such as Late-start Wednesday, leadership meetings, staff meetings and professional development sessions support the integration of priorities
 - Engage regularly with the instructional leadership team to review and monitor progress on identified school and district priorities
 - Support building administrators and department heads in the work of cultivating leadership within their own teams
 - Visit classrooms to celebrate and support teaching and learning across the district

- Understand and articulate, as a result of the aforementioned conversations, what a successful K-12 learning experience looks like in Lakewood.

Domain 3: Staff Relationships

- **OBJECTIVE:** Through active listening, accessibility and modeling, create a culture of trust and shared leadership with a focus on student engagement and growth. In service to this goal, the Superintendent will:
 - Engage the Administrative Leadership Team as both individuals and as a whole to develop trust, discuss expectations, define roles and responsibilities and establish communication avenues
 - Meet with all administrators and supervisors individually and in groups
 - Develop, in collaboration with Cabinet, an Administrative Leadership Team retreat that engages all district, school and departmental leaders in reflection of their personal leadership stories, how they intersect with the Lakewood story, what we want the Lakewood story to be moving forward, and how current priorities may (or may not) align in service to that story
 - Weave reflection, conversation and learning consistent with the administrative retreat throughout the school year
 - In collaboration with principals, identify opportunities to celebrate staff and programmatic successes
 - Conduct individual meetings with all principals and with school teams (staff, students, families) to obtain perspectives on the district's/schools' strengths and opportunities for growth
 - Visit school staff meetings to introduce myself, engage with staff around their priorities and interests
 - Include school staff as participants in the Lakewood Community Café (October 9, 2019)
 - Identify effective methods to communicate regularly with staff
 - Visit schools and classrooms frequently
 - Experience school transportation through the eyes of a driver and a student
 - Enjoy nutritious meals with students
 - With superintendent's administrative assistant and PIO, identify methods of publicizing staff and student successes

- Meet with union/association leadership to maintain and build a relationship based on trust, communication and common interests
- Understand available resources and cultivate supports for staff who experience trauma and personal loss

Domain 4: Community Engagement

- **OBJECTIVE:** Maintain and build ownership and support of our schools by engaging the community in articulating what they value about Lakewood schools, what priorities they support and the challenges that they see for our district. In service to this goal, the Superintendent will:
 - Attend established community groups' meetings; such as local boards, parent councils, and other similar groups to listen, answer questions and provide critical information concerning priorities, programs, funding, legislation, community development, enrollment and other topics of importance
 - Meet with key community leaders, including those from the Help committee, the Lakewood Education Foundation, Superintendent's Community Connections group, sports and band boosters, local service organizations and businesses, faith-based organizations and the Arlington Chamber of Commerce
 - Invite all parents and community members to the Lakewood Community Café (October 9, 2019)
 - Facilitate individual, small-group and large group dialogue that provide community members, parents, students and staff the opportunity to articulate what they value about their past and their futures
 - Collaborate with school administrators and the Director of Facilities to offer community nights/open houses at newly constructed or remodeled facilities
 - Spend time with key individual community members such as former Board members and matriarchs/patriarchs of long-time families
 - Meet with emergency responders including the police chief, sheriff, fire department and medical providers in context of emergency planning
 - Meet with the local newspaper and other media outlets to develop relationships
 - Arrange to meet the mayor and the city council, and state legislators.
 - Engage parents and community members through school events such as sports, plays, concerts, open houses

- Develop multiple layers of communication that focus on key areas such as student achievements, construction, program development, state legislation and funding

Domain 5: Systemic Feedback and Reflection

- **OBJECTIVE:** Build familiarity with the infrastructure, practices, procedures, traditions and dynamics of the district, understanding all decisions (no matter how small) impact the nature and quality of the relationships upon which student learning depends. In service to this goal, the Superintendent will:
 - Meet with Cabinet members individually and collectively to be articulate (and if necessary, rethink) areas of responsibility, major initiatives and projected timelines
 - Ensure that the individuals who need to be part of decisions are consulted and have input into decisions that impact their departments and budgets
 - Engage regularly with administrators in follow-up to and continuation of the summer administrative leadership retreat
 - Participate regularly in meetings with consultants such as CEL, Continua Consulting, ESD 189, representatives of Emergency Responders to monitor and reflect upon progress around district priorities
 - Meet regularly with LEA president and PSE leadership
 - Analyze and collaborate with Cabinet on the Lakewood School District Budget for the fiscal year 2019-20
 - Process with Cabinet and the Board feedback and learnings gathered during the Superintendent transition process
 - Study and/or be briefed on all major district documents such as policies, handbooks, and procedures
 - Review state and federal grants to understand their purpose, timelines, and plans for sustainability.
 - Review any pending legal matters with school counsel and Cabinet administrators
 - Become knowledgeable of all safety and security procedures and protocol
 - Understand the demographics of the community, district, and individual schools both statistically and through community engagement

“To achieve the kind of world we consider human, some people had to dare to break the thrall of tradition. Next, they had to find ways of recording those new ideas Finally, they had to find ways of transmitting the new knowledge to the generations to come. Those who were involved in this process we call creative.”

*--Mihaly Csikszentmihaly in *Creativity**

Outcomes

The process of uncovering what is most important to people is not linear. It is not bounded by specific processes or products, though both serve their purpose in leveraging this engagement plan in ways that bring people together, clarify what they want to create and, ultimately, move our district forward. If we want to be creative, the heart of such a process is found primarily in the shared experiences of conversation, reflection and action—coordinated or not.

The outcomes of this process will include a narrative framed as a response the following questions:

- What do people value about Lakewood schools and community?
- What challenges define the future of our district and students?
- What do we want to maintain or create as we look to our collective future and the future of our students?

It will capture, as much as possible, the essence of what people said they want, individually and collectively. It will provide a foundation for the identification of a strategic growth plan through which we will articulate a vision, goals, a communal development process and methodologies for feedback and reflection, while leaving room for what is emergent, surprising and adventurous.

Ultimately, the goal is that, irrespective of what documents this process generates, it will create conditions for people to come together. It will allow the Board, Cabinet and myself

to be more fully present with the people that we serve and to ensure that our relationships are dynamic, generative and placed in service to students and the future of Lakewood.