

Every Child. Every Day. For a Better Tomorrow.



# SUPERINTENDENT ENTRY PLAN

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Establishing Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools  
as the Premier School District in the Nation





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## Introduction

*The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education has charged me, as incoming superintendent, with improving achievement for **all** students and making the school district systems and processes more effective and efficient.*

The Board’s Vision statement articulates the overall goal broadly and clearly: *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools provides all students the best education available anywhere, preparing every child to lead a rich and productive life.* In addition, the Board’s Mission statement explains how this will be achieved: *The mission of CMS is to maximize academic achievement by every student in every school.*

How close is the district to realizing this goal? What are the challenges that must be addressed to complete the journey? As superintendent, I must address these issues and many others to ensure that CMS is on a path to become the nation’s best school district, offering all students the opportunity to excel.

This document is my entry plan. In it I will provide the framework for my activities from now through the end of 2012. The entry plan will cover my first 100 days as superintendent, as well as the months that follow through the end of 2012.

My entry plan and my work as superintendent will be guided by a tenet put forth by Stephen Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He

says that leaders must “first seek to understand, then to be understood.” The transition activities outlined in this plan are designed to enable me to quickly and effectively listen to and learn from a wide range of people involved directly and indirectly in public education.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is viewed across the nation as an innovative, effective district. But during my time in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County for the interview, and in my visits since being named superintendent, one theme has emerged very clearly: Many stakeholders do not think that CMS leadership is listening to them or attuned to their concerns. This has led many people to distrust the district, to view CMS negatively and to dismiss the district’s many real accomplishments. I will address this issue of perceived deafness and distrust by seeking out stakeholders of all views and listening carefully to their concerns. For CMS to succeed will require trust and collaboration. I will work to address public concerns and build a stronger relationship between the district, its families and the public. There will be differences of opinion at times, but I will always put the best interests of students



*Leaders must “first seek to understand, then to be understood.”*

*– Stephen Covey*



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first, working for every child, every day for a better tomorrow. I will listen and be transparent so that no one can doubt that CMS decisions - even those that may spark disagreement - are made in the best interests of children.

For CMS to succeed completely requires not only public engagement but employees who are energized, engaged and feel valued. The economic climate and other factors in recent years have taken a toll. I will work with the Board and staff to bolster employee morale.

The search process was educational for me, and also for the Board; and we will work together to address the concerns that surfaced during the search.

This will allow me to begin assessing the district's strengths and weaknesses and identify areas needing

immediate focus and those requiring more long-range planning. I will thus be able to leverage the momentum of change, creating a coalition of the willing to realize the Board's mission to maximize academic achievement by every student in every school.

The Board and I share a sense of urgency about this work. Delaying needed changes and improvements does not benefit students. So I will make decisions quickly where appropriate as I am listening and learning. To help in this process, I will create a transition team to review the CMS strategic plan, organizational structure, the state of teaching and learning in CMS and the organizational culture, context and communication. The team will include knowledgeable members of the CMS staff as well as outside experts.



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## The entry plan has three phases:



### Goals

This entry plan sets five broad goals and addresses pre-entry and entry activities for each one. The five goals are:

1. To focus organizational efforts and align resources to ensure all students are college- and career-ready and achievement gaps are closed
2. To establish and promote highly effective district governance by building a trusting, productive, collaborative relationship with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education
3. To increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency and ensure high performance and support to schools
4. To establish a respectful, positive district culture centered on teaching and learning
5. To build public trust capital and confidence through open, honest communication and positive relationships

To reach these goals, I will do the following:

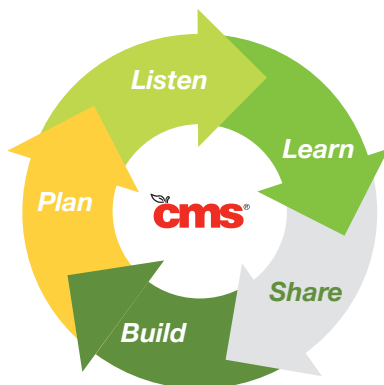
**Listen** — Spend time with students, teachers, parents, principals, school district administrators and other CMS employees, community and business members, and state and local leaders, to hear about their proudest accomplishments and greatest challenges.

**Learn** — Analyze and study performance data and other student achievement data. Read and review existing district policies and implementation of reforms. Receive issue and policy briefings from CMS employees and education organizations.

**Share** — Get to know the community better by sharing my leadership story and my educational philosophies and core values. I will strive to establish a positive tone and an urgent pace.

**Build** — Establish strong working relationships and build rapport with the Board of Education, CMS leadership and employees, and community, state and local leaders.

**Plan** — Review the current strategic plan with specific action steps to guide the work of CMS and the Board of Education and to prepare for the 2013-2014 budget and legislative agenda.



These activities are intended to yield three key outcomes: a comprehensive summary of my findings, observations and information gained from listening and learning; an outline of the process I will use to review the district's current strategic plan and how the Board and I will work together to achieve systemic transformation, and a district and community energized about the direction of CMS and ready to work collaboratively.

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## Goals and Pre-Entry / Entry Actions

### 1. Student Achievement:

**To focus organizational efforts and align resources to ensure all students are college- and career-ready and achievement gaps are closed**



Ensuring all students not only graduate from CMS but also receive diplomas that truly demonstrate college- and work-readiness is the ultimate goal and responsibility of all employees. To ensure instruction is occurring at high levels, teachers must have a rigorous K-12 instructional curriculum, processes and tools to monitor student progress as well as opportunities and resources to provide necessary interventions. We will focus on teaching and learning and put the needs of students first in every decision.

#### Pre-Entry Actions:

- Review any instructional audits completed by outside groups such as the Council of Great City Schools and determine follow-up steps
- Analyze patterns in student achievement data and achievement gaps to evaluate the current state of teaching and learning
- Assess district's expectations for all students' academic success and commitment to meeting the needs of all of its diverse learners
- Identify chronically underperforming schools and initiate root-cause analysis of why they're not meeting the needs of students; determine a course of appropriate action

#### Entry Actions:

- Meet with CMS instructional-leadership team to discuss achievement data, instructional program alignment, current goals and priority action areas for the district
  - Determine the scope and breadth of CMS curricula
  - Determine the degree of rigor embedded in the current curricula
  - Determine how well current curricula aligns with the Common Core State Standards
- 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
- Assess CMS professional development and capacity for meeting the training needs of principals, teachers and central-office staff; determine the degree to which it is job-embedded, differentiated and student-achievement directed; analyze budget to determine how much is devoted to professional development and how it is being assessed
- Evaluate district efforts to improve graduation rates for all students with particular focus on groups of at-risk students
- Explore how CMS monitors data to ensure all students are performing at or above grade level and/or are receiving appropriate, targeted interventions
- Evaluate the use and effectiveness of current formative assessments, their alignment with the instructional program and how accurately they measure student growth and progress; assess curriculum maps, pacing guides and monitoring rubrics



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- Inventory all technology-based instructional equipment and software and determine readiness for 21st-century learning and blended-learning opportunities
- Meet with each zone superintendent to review performance results of their schools, assess progress and determine proactive actions for continuous support and improvement
- Review current work on the Talent Effectiveness Project and collaborate on next steps

## **2. Governance Team/Board of Education: To establish and promote highly effective district governance by building a productive and collaborative relationship with the Board of Education**

In order to ensure an intense focus on meeting the needs of all children, the Board and superintendent must develop a trusting, positive, collaborative and team-oriented relationship. Relationships must be established with each Board member and the Board as a whole. I will work with the Board on issues of governance, management, core values and beliefs, Reform Governance and Theory of Action. A strong relationship between the Board and the superintendent is essential for district progress, and we will work together to build an agenda that is student-centered. We will also engage the community in this agenda.

### **Pre-Entry Actions:**

- Share entry plan for feedback, suggestions and guidance
- Engage in one-on-one meetings with Board members to deepen relationships and broaden perspectives
- Hold first Board retreat to discuss communication protocols, roles and responsibilities, norms of behavior and interaction, expectations for first year and agenda setting
- Review Board election calendar to assess continuity of governance
- Examine the current protocols and processes for addressing constituent services

### **Entry Actions:**

- Develop and begin using appropriate communication protocols between the Board and superintendent
- Conduct three-on-one breakfast/lunch/dinner meetings with all Board members to continue to build positive, productive relationships
- Meet with the Board chairperson and committee chairs to determine how they work in partnership with the superintendent and executive staff
- Collaborate on the next set of Board retreats to focus on shared values, reflections on

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organizational structure, areas of improvement, ongoing professional development and established Theory of Action. Suggest a book study around *What School Boards Can Do* by Donald McAdams or a similarly appropriate text.

- Develop a process, structure and timeline to measure success of current strategic plan, system improvement plan and budget for the district
  - Using Board of Education policy, collaborate on a performance evaluation format with objectives and indicators of success to be used to evaluate the superintendent and Board
  - Establish regular meeting times with the Board chair and vice chair for reviewing and constructing agendas, agenda review processes and yearly calendar
  - Visit various community organizations and functions with Board members
  - Conduct school visits with Board members

### **3. Organizational capacity and alignment/district executive staff: To increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency and ensure high performance and support to schools**

- To fully realize the Board's vision, as well as the goals set out in *Strategic Plan 2014: Teaching our Way to the Top*, requires a high-performing, results-oriented district executive team. To make sure executive staff operates as a highly cross-functional team dedicated to a positive, professional culture, CMS must make sure the right people are on the bus in the right seats, in the words of author Jim Collins.
- All central-office functions must be effective and efficient. I believe central office must provide

outstanding service to schools and commit to a continuous-improvement model. I will analyze the current strengths, strategies and opportunities for improvement in light of current budget challenges.

#### **Pre-Entry Actions:**

- Identify key staff to assist with the transition within the organization
- Identify and hire critical new team members to join executive staff
- Review standards of practice for executive staff
- Establish regularly scheduled meetings with executive staff, zone superintendents and principals, and set clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, expectations and systems for mutual accountability
- Review the current central-office structure to determine focus on student achievement and maximizing operational efficiency
- Request briefing papers from all division managers providing an overview of their current areas of responsibility, major initiatives under way with projected timelines, a review of significant or potential problems in each area of responsibility and major decisions needing to be made in one month, three months and six months
- Conduct one-on-one interviews and review resumes and briefing papers with all direct reports
- Review all critical documents, including the organizational chart, employee handbooks, policy and procedures manuals, the strategic plan and student achievement data by school
- Conduct a retreat with executive staff to review district's strategic plan, improvement plan, recent achievement data, current or anticipated vacancies in central office or principalships and discuss leadership team structures and practices



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- Review key district financial materials, budget, most recent audits and grants
- Initiate a review of resources and information available on the Internet and intranet for CMS

## Entry Actions:

- Determine how communication and decision making will occur with executive team, establishing meeting protocols and systems designed to focus on increased student achievement and continuous improvement
- Conduct one-on-one interviews with all unit heads in central services, focusing on alignment and execution of key strategies
- Conduct an organizational audit using expert practitioners to review alignment, coherence and efficiency of the current organizational structure
- 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

- Assess the degree to which all offices are cross-functional and review the current state of process management and how closely it aligns with the Board's Theory of Action
- 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
- Review all functions around finding the best teachers, principals and other employees and initiate an audit of the human resources department
- Plan a second retreat with executive staff to review accountability plans for all functional units, clarify process and progress toward improvement with strategic plan and district improvement plan, review current and future budget issues and current organizational structure
- Review processes and systems that guide the distribution of resources and ensure that the allocation of resources aligns with student needs



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- Review district's financial projections, resource allocation and the process for building the annual operating budget; assess how it is aligned to support achievement by all students
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with legal office to review any current legal proceedings or outstanding judgments against the district
- Receive updates on plans regarding CMS' role with North Carolina's Race to the Top grant, as well as others such as School Improvement Grants and Title I
- Review district's safety and crisis communication plan and make any changes or adjustments needed
- Examine the effectiveness of CMS' information-data management system, especially around student achievement, budget and human resources
- Ensure all necessary plans and preparations are in place for an outstanding opening of schools; establish protocols for assessing effectiveness of the opening of schools

#### 4. Organization Culture: To establish a respectful, positive district culture centered on teaching and learning

Schools and offices will only reach high levels of performance if all district employees work in collaboration, establishing a culture of trust and commitment to professional learning communities. The challenging work of teaching and learning can only be successful if we create a self-renewing organization built on valuing each employee's vital role in helping CMS reach its vision and mission.

##### Pre-Entry Actions:

- Establish positive relationships with key district leadership and meet with all central-operations departments
- Assess the quality, quantity and effectiveness of all existing forms of internal communication with various stakeholders, including Board members, teachers, administrative staff, support staff, and student leaders
- Establish an organizational norm for open, effective and consistent communication throughout the district and within our community



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## Entry Actions:

- Schedule meetings with principal and teacher organizations and committees, and establish routine meetings and communications with these organizations
- Hold open forums regularly with teachers, staff, district leaders, parents and students for personal communication about critical issues
- Schedule before- and after-school superintendent coffees to be held at various school sites on a monthly basis to hear ideas, concerns and suggestions
- Schedule a visit to every school and build relationships with principals, teachers and staff
- Working with human resources staff, review existing surveys and identify areas or schools with low morale or negative culture
- Create a district-wide employee-engagement survey to gain a comprehensive picture of district culture and morale
- Assess the district's commitment to valuing diversity and engaging in positive cultural competency training

## 5. Community and Public Relations: To build public-trust capital and confidence through open, honest communication and positive relationships

I believe that indeed “it takes a village to raise a child.” In today’s society, that means community involvement and engagement is essential to build effective schools. I will focus on engaging and mobilizing parents and community leaders in the pursuit of making CMS the nation’s finest school district, working to keep communications open and transparent. I will also focus on learning the culture, history and expectations of CMS. I will be proactive and deliberate in reaching out to all stakeholders – listening to those traditionally underrepresented in public education as well as those traditionally engaged with CMS. Public education is naturally diverse; and to be most effective, our district must reflect a wide range of viewpoints and cultures. We must work to serve the needs of all students. We want our best students to soar even higher. We want our average students to stretch and achieve at higher levels. We want our struggling students to catch up to their peers. Public education is about teaching all children, not just some of them, so that every child has the opportunity to succeed.



*“It takes  
a village  
to raise  
a child.”*

*– African proverb*



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*“Everybody  
can be great  
because  
anybody  
can serve.”*

*– Dr. Martin Luther  
King, Jr.*

I will work to build strong relationships with key leaders and members of business, service, faith-based, not-for-profit, philanthropic and political organizations. It is my expressed purpose to build a coalition of the willing to help serve the 140,000 students of CMS.

I will ask these leaders to share their views on increasing academic achievement, district strengths, areas of needed improvement, budget issues and top priorities, and what it will take to make CMS the best district in America. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said that “Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.” CMS is fortunate to have a community that is deeply concerned about public education, with many individuals and organizations willing to serve schools. Such public interest and willingness is an asset that the district should use in building the best schools.

## **Pre-Entry Actions:**

- Call key leaders to introduce myself and build relationships, use the CMS website and other avenues to communicate and meet with key leaders identified by the Board and staff
- Meet with a wide range of citizens and groups involved in public education during my visits to the district before July 1

## **Entry Actions:**

- Conduct a review of the district’s public information office and programs; review the history, services and outreach to entire community
- Conduct a communication audit to determine levels of effectiveness with building public-trust capital and proactive community outreach
- Reach out to critical stakeholders to establish routine meetings, communication protocols and reciprocal dialogues, focusing on increased student achievement and continuous improvement; initiate open, honest and transparent dialogues with the goal of strengthening and improving strategic partnerships. This would include, but not be limited to, parents, teachers, school staff, local, state and national elected officials, state education leaders, Chamber of Commerce officials, university officials, business leaders and heads of organizations. Other critical stakeholders would include civic leaders and advocates, non-profit groups, faith-based leaders, former superintendents and Board members.
- Conduct visits to every school in CMS to engage the principal, teachers, support staff and parent volunteers about where we are as a district and where we need to be to meet the needs of all children

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- Schedule meetings with the established parent organizations for initial listening and learning sessions. Establish routine meetings and communications with these organizations.
- Schedule meetings with the established student leadership organizations for initial listening and learning sessions. Establish routine meetings and communications with these organizations.
- With the Board and executive staff, host multiple town hall meetings to gather community input and initiate continuous dialogues about student achievement and improvement. These meetings will occur throughout all areas of the school district. There will be proactive efforts to meet with stakeholders who have traditionally not attended such forums, as well as with individuals and groups who have been active on public education issues. The goal is to build new partnerships and strengthen existing ones.
- Meet with leaders of local media outlets, editorial boards and education reporters, including diverse and business press to establish a framework for collaboration that is open, honest, transparent and accurate. Hold regular media briefings to share district information.
- Meet with CMS Parent University and determine alignment with current strategic plan
- Visit Project L.I.F.T. schools and establish relationships with leaders
- Attend services at area houses of worship to build relationships with the faith community and hear their concerns and ideas so that they can be addressed as we make decisions in CMS
- Increase opportunities to promote Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' image within the community and to develop advocacy for what is effective and working well



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*“Good is  
the enemy  
of great.”*

*– Jim Collins*

## **The Superintendent’s First Day and First Day of School**

On July 2, my first day, I want to visit schools, meet with Board members and key leaders in the community as well as principals, teachers, staff, parents and students. I also want to arrange to meet with students who did not graduate to discuss what could have been done to keep them in school. I will also meet with students who struggled but successfully finished school, as well as students who finished school with relative ease.

On Aug. 27, the first day of school, I want to visit a variety of schools including a high school, middle school and elementary school within several zones. I also want to visit a magnet school and a Pre-K–8 school. This will be an important day to meet with the press and hold a town hall meeting. I will meet with executive staff to evaluate the quality of opening day/week activities, making any needed adjustments and improvements.

Near the end of the first 90 days, I will have learned a great deal about CMS and be ready to report out on those findings. Through multiple meetings with key stakeholders, some initial ideas will have been developed regarding new directions for the future. To ensure transparency and inclusion throughout the process, there will be a link on the CMS website with updates on the progress of my plan,

calendar, people with whom I’ve met, and public events and forums.

Around this time, another Board retreat will be scheduled to announce findings, propose plans and collaborate with the Board on a planning system to drive improvements in student achievement and organizational efficiency. Proposed plans and agendas will also be communicated to the school community to promote understanding, commitment and support for the goals and purpose of making CMS the best school district in the nation.

As I noted in the introduction to this plan, CMS is widely perceived outside the district as strong and innovative. I believe that it is – and I also believe that it can be improved in many ways. Author Jim Collins has said that “good is the enemy of great” – and in the context of public schools, that means that being good can lead to a culture of “being good enough.” That culture does not serve all students well. I share the Board’s vision of making CMS the best district in America and I will work with the Board as well as the entire community to make CMS not merely good, but great. This will require honesty about what we are doing well and what we must do better. I believe that CMS has the will and the capacity to be a great district; and as superintendent, I will work to make that vision a reality, serving every child, every day for a better tomorrow.





In compliance with federal law, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age or disability.