



My First 100 Days

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Superintendent

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Introduction

On my first day as Superintendent of Mountain View Whisman School District, I shared my 100-day entry plan. This plan was developed to serve as the blueprint for learning more about the district. This plan had six goals and four outcomes. The goals of the plan were as follows:

Goals

This entry plan was designed to address the following goals:

1. Develop a strong, collaborative relationship with the Board of Trustees and to determine the goals, expectations, and foundation for Mountain View Whisman's Strategic Plan 2020.
2. To ensure an effective, efficient, and orderly transition of leadership, keeping the focus on increased student achievement for all children.
3. To create opportunities for the new superintendent to listen broadly and deeply to a multitude of stakeholders and gain a comprehensive understanding of MVWSD.
4. To proactively ensure that all voices, not just those who traditionally avail themselves to collaboration with the school system, are heard and engaged in the process of continuous improvement.
5. To identify and execute activities that must happen immediately to ensure an outstanding beginning to the school year.
6. To build excitement and momentum for MVWSD's vision, mission, and future strategic plan, while also establishing the commitment to engage in needed improvement.

Outcomes

1. A comprehensive summary of the findings and observations collected from the various activities outlined within this plan.
2. Build upon the high levels of civic, parent, business and community engagement through clear and transparent communication.
3. Establishing the foundation of a 5-year strategic plan and possible short-term improvement plans for urgent matters.
4. An energized district and community about the focus and direction of the MVWSD.



As mentioned, the official conclusion of this plan would yield a summary of what I saw, heard and learned; my initial impressions of our system's current reality; and the path that I believe our school system needs to take if we are going to reach our fullest potential.

During my first 100 days, I made it a point to meet with as many stakeholders as possible. I spoke with every principal individually, met with teachers and staff during their lunch, traveled to every site on the first day of school and held meet and greets in every corner of the community. I met with current and former trustees, former MVWSD and neighboring districts' superintendents, council members, mayors, civic and business leaders. I spent time having lunch with employees from each department and learned and listened to our dedicated staff who currently serve as the backbone of our organization. I visited various businesses, community partners, and neighboring universities. Finally, we conducted a comprehensive review of the district and all schools. All in all, I was impressed with everyone's willingness to be open about the strengths and opportunities for growth. Those conversations have provided me with a great understanding of our current reality.

Looking back, the moments that I cherished the most during my first 100 days are the times spent with students. Whether it was in the classroom, or in one of our many outdoor learning environments, our students displayed a curiosity about the world around them, their passion for improving their community and their genuine desire to do well in life. It is now apparent that if we create a supportive environment

where they can reach their own personal apex, they will rise to any expectations that we place on them.

I also spent a considerable amount of time with teachers, staff, parents and administrators. After every conversation, I walked away impressed with their passion and commitment to our students. Our staff clearly understands the unique perspectives that our students bring. It is clear that they want to have a voice in the strategies that we use to develop well-rounded children.

Key Insights

I reflected on my many conversations with staff, performance, the data, and the results from the District Quality Review (DQR). Several themes have surfaced as key insights about the district that will help us move closer to realizing our desired state. The first insight is a strength that we should continue to build upon. The last two insights are opportunities for growth that in the coming months we need to have a laser-like focus on.

Key Insights

1: We have all the necessary resources in our community to meet our kid's needs

2: We are a "frustrated" organization

3: Our performance is hindered by our lack of Strategic Focus



Insight One: We have all the necessary resources in our community to meet our kids’ needs.

The community of Mountain View has made a tremendous commitment to the success of our school district. We work collaboratively with our civic leaders to maintain the schools. Once a month members of the community gather together to discuss how they can address challenges that impact our students.

From the DQR

Partner organizations confidently share that they have a productive relationship that is well attended and continues to grow with the Mountain View Whisman School District. Partners also feel welcome, valued, and believe the district is responsive when needs arise.

Moreover, our community has shown unwavering support for schools by funding our Foundation, supporting a parcel tax and a capital bond program. We have strong business partners who are willing to fund programs and initiatives such as instructional coaches, comprehensive reviews, and student activities. We are extremely fortunate in this area. The fact that our community has the financial means to withstand economic ebbs and flows of the country is impressive. Our growing economy coupled with the talent that resides within our community and everyone’s commitment to our students, teachers, staff and organization is atypical. However, we have to do a better job of aligning/tapping into our resources to reach our long-term goals. We must, as a community, commit to resourcing the educational programs that we believe are integral to improving outcomes for all students.

Insight Two: We are a “frustrated” organization.

Mountain View Whisman continues to be influenced by a number of external and internal factors that create uncertainty and angst. The following items seem to have the greatest impact on our people:

- Employees on multiple levels are unaware of the expectations of their jobs. Additionally, they are unsure of not only the metrics but also how their job contributes to student performance. Finally, the lack of expectations coupled with no formal systems for accountability leaves the district in a poor position for supporting professional growth of staff at any level.
- The adoption of new standards and curriculum has created a tremendous amount of stress on staff. Several instructional programs have either been poorly rolled out, or completely abandoned, which in turn has left many wary of reform efforts.
- The lack of effective communication systems creates unnecessary barriers to improving student outcomes. As a result, the district functions as a system of schools rather than a school system. Additionally, communication systems inside the district office are insufficient and often unclear. Lastly, the lack of a single coherent message inhibits many members of the community to understand how they, or their organizations, can contribute to improving student achievement.
- The uncertainty of several large initiatives (i.e. Measure G capital bond project, and Measure C Parcel Tax), have left the staff wondering not only about the state of the schools, but also several strategically funded initiatives.
- The rising cost of living in our district, and the Bay Area, is forcing staff to make tough choices about where to live, how long they are willing to commute, and whether they should seek employment elsewhere.

All in all, people within our organization are under a very high level of stress. Often times the stressors are out of our employee's control. I want our staff to know that I understand their concerns and will work on their behalf to try and reduce some of these concerns. I will continue develop effective and efficient systems, as well as communicate with staff about changes that have an impact on our educational milieu.

Insight Three: Our performance is hindered by our lack of Strategic Focus.

We need to improve our focus, cohesion, and alignment in our organization. It is clear that the absence of a clear strategic plan inhibits our ability to guide meaningful work at all levels. As a result, stakeholder groups are unclear on how their work contributes to the realization of the district vision. Lastly, the DQR showed that the inefficient organizational structure is serving as an impediment to change and higher levels of performance. This is something that needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

It's time for a new Strategic Plan

My insights are derived from my 100-day listening, learning and leading tour. It is because of these insights that I am narrowing our focus to two key areas that will be an integral part to our ability to improve student outcomes at every level. These two priorities will become our "Advantage." They will enable us to not only address our district's needs, but also allow us to develop systems of continuous improvement.

Focus Areas

1: Development of a Strategic Plan

2: Establish an efficient and strategically focused organization that has the capacity to improve student achievement and operations.

Focus 1: Development of a Strategic Plan

Over the next six months, we need to develop a strategic plan. Our challenge is rethinking how we do things and what systems we need to put into place. Our Strategic Plan will help everyone who interacts with the district play a role

in student achievement. It will help employees to understand the expectations and the metrics used to measure success. My observation is that as an organization we care deeply about every student who walks through our doors. We have committed partners and caring parents. We have everything we need to get the job done. A Strategic Plan will drive us to higher levels of performance.

Focus 2: Establish an efficient and strategically focused organization that has the capacity to improve student achievement and operations.

The District employs extremely hard-working, committed individuals. But, we need to develop systems that allow everyone to work more effectively and efficiently. When we couple an effective system with our dedicated team members, we will see that all things are possible.



Next Steps

Over the course of the year you can expect to see the following improvements that will enable us to become a high-performing school district.

- We will continue to adopt rigorous curricula that contribute to our students' success in high school.
- We will develop clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations for every level of the organization.
- Using data, we will direct resources and personnel to meet the needs of each of our schools.
- We will continue to develop two-way communication protocols that allow for transparent communication with all stakeholders.
- We will continue to host listening and learning opportunities that allow us to garner suggestions and ideas for improvement
- We will revisit and revamp our programs and develop a system that reflects our unified commitment to all of our students.

- We will develop a robust professional development program that focuses on the needs of all of our staff members.

In closing, it is important for us to realize that we are not changing things just to change things. Instead it is my goal to capitalize on our strengths, and find ways to minimize our weaknesses. Taking everything into account I believe that we have an incredible opportunity ahead of us. Furthermore, by tapping into all of the resources that we have in our community, we can develop an excellent plan of action, and unleash the talent that exists within our district. I am confident that we will do great things together.

I want to close with a quote from a former Monta Loma student:

"What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them." ~Steve Jobs.



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