



School Committee Retreat Meeting Materials

Salem School Committee

January 4, 2016

5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

*Mr. James M. Fleming
Ms. Rachel Hunt
Ms. Mary A. Manning*



*Mr. Patrick Schultz
Dr. Brendan R. Walsh
Ms. Kristine Wilson*

Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Chair

December 30, 2015

Envisioning the Future of Salem Public Schools

Monday, January 4, 5:00-9:00pm

Salem State University, Marsh Hall Room 210

Retreat Goals

Learning Together as a Team

- Build on our shared vision for effective governance

Strategic Planning for the Future

- Review and discuss Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings and proposed priorities for long-range strategic planning
- Develop a powerful vision, focused mission, and core beliefs for the future of SPS that forms of the foundation of and drives the upcoming strategic planning
- Briefly review proposed planning process and agree on rules of engagement for SC members

2016-17 Budget Planning Process

- Review and discuss proposed FY17 budget planning process to align with AIP priorities

Pre-Reading Materials

- Review Notes from July 2015 Retreat
- Review Chapter 1: Why Boards Must Lead in McAdams, Donald R. (2006). What school boards can do: Reform governance for urban schools. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, pp. 5-12.
- Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings Report

RETREAT AGENDA

5:00 Welcome, Introductions, and Ice Breaker

5:15 Review Agenda and Meeting Norms

5:20 Learning Together as a Team: Effective Governance

6:20 Break for Dinner (30 mins)

6:50 Strategic Planning for the Future

- Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings and Proposed Priorities
- Developing a Powerful Vision
- Developing a Focused Mission Statement and Set of Core Beliefs

- 8:00 Briefly Share Proposed Planning Process and Assign Homework Task**
- 8:15 Review and Discuss Proposed Plans for the 2016-17 Budget Planning Process to Align with the AIP Priorities**
- 8:55 Wrap up and Next Steps**
- 9:00 Adjourn**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Eileen M. Sacco, Secretary to
Salem School Committee



Envisioning the Future of Salem Public Schools

Salem Public Schools

School Committee Retreat

January 4, 2016, 5:00 – 9:00 pm

Retreat Goals

Learning Together as a Team

- Build on our shared vision for effective governance

Strategic Planning for the Future

- Review and discuss Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings and priorities
- Develop a powerful vision for the future of SPS to form foundation for strategic plan
- Review proposed strategic planning and engagement process
- Review and discuss proposed FY17 budget planning process

AGENDA

- 5:00** Welcome, Introductions, and Ice breaker
- 5:15** Meeting Norms
- 5:20** Learning Together as a Team: Effective Governance
- 6:20** Break for Dinner
- 6:50** Strategic Planning for the Future
- 7:00** Developing a Powerful Vision Statement
- 7:15** Revise or Reaffirm SPS Mission and Core Principles
- 8:00** Briefly Share Proposed Strategic Planning Process
- 8:15** Review and Discuss Proposed FY17 Budget Planning Process
- 8:55** Wrap up and next steps
- 9:00** Adjourn

Introductions & Ice breaker

- **Please introduce yourself and describe your role in the district.**
- **Share one word that describes how you are feeling for the new year.**

Meeting Norms

- **Start on time – end on time**
- **Be fully present and remain engaged**
- **Listen to understand**
- **Honor all voices – invite different perspectives**
- **Be open to new ideas**
- **Assume good intentions**
- **Other?**

Effective school committee governance?



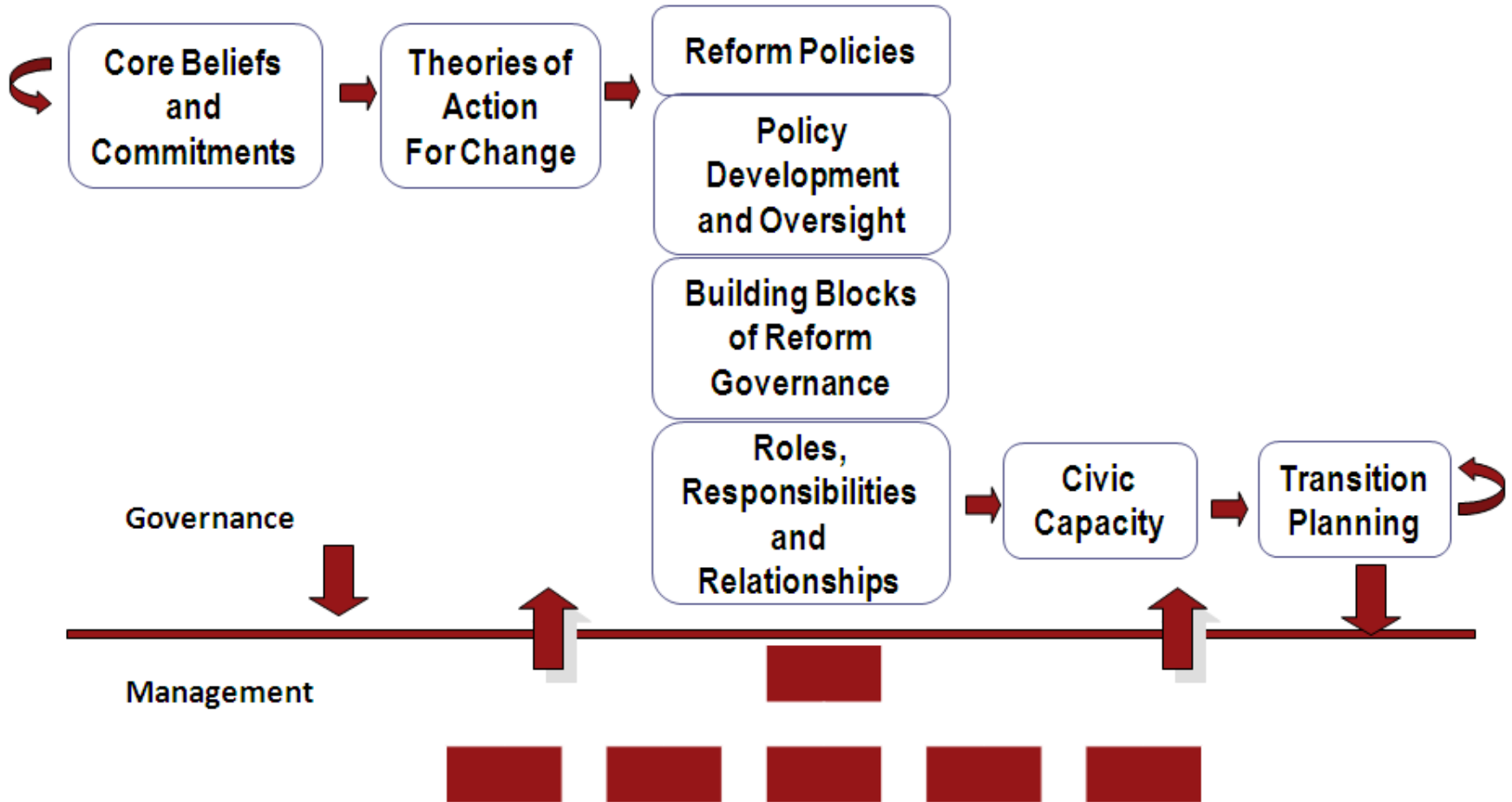
Effective governance to accelerate improvement?

- Is there a difference between school boards in high achieving vs. low achieving districts?
- What does the research say?

Governance in high performing districts?



From the Field: Reform Governance [®]



Building on Our Shared Vision for Effective Governance

- **Divide into three small groups**
 - Identify a group timekeeper and a recorder
- **Using the worksheet, review the indicators of effective governance in high performing districts.**
 - Identify any strengths, areas for growth and recommendations for improvement in any of these areas
- **Record responses for your group and be prepared to share with the whole group**

Break for Dinner

Strategic Planning for the Future

First steps taken today...

- Brief review of Entry Plan findings and proposed priorities
- Vision-statement activity
- Small group discussion to revise or re-affirm SPS mission and core principles
- Briefly review proposed planning and engagement process

Overview of Entry Plan Findings Presentation Outline

- **Summary of Entry Findings and Themes**
 - See handouts for strengths and areas for growth
- **Proposed Priorities to Guide Strategic Plan for the District**
- **Timeline for Continued Analysis and Strategic Planning**

Major Themes Uncovered

Teaching and Learning

Communication

Engagement

Recruiting and Retaining Talent

Infrastructure

Other

Strengths and Areas for Growth for each area are available on the handout

Hopes

Hopes and Aspirations for Salem Public Schools

To be a highly rated and highly chosen district promoted by realtors.

Become a vibrant school district that inspires the love of learning in all students.

To have a strong vision for the future which unites the work of all stakeholders.

To be a district of high expectations for students. To ensure college and career readiness for all.

To attract and retain great teachers, leaders and staff in our district.

To be a highly inclusive district where all of our diverse populations feel welcome, respected and celebrated.

To have a better budget process that allocates resources based on the needs of students, thus reducing inequities across schools.

Expectations

Expectations of New Superintendent

Build consensus and a strong shared vision for the district.

Provide regular, transparent communication to all stakeholders.

To raise the bar, insist on high expectations for all.

To exhibit courageous, passionate leadership.

To improve our schools; restore pride in the Salem Public Schools.

To foster better, more positive connections with minority communities, parents in general, teachers and the community.

Key Priorities to Drive Strategic Planning

Ensure Learning and Growth for Every Student, Every Day

- Prepare **ALL** students for college and career success
- Increase **rigor**
- **Meet the needs of our diverse learners**

Strengthen Infrastructure to Support our Schools

- **Strong HR systems** – effective recruitment and retention of talent
- **Strategic and transparent budget process**; reduce resources inequalities
- **Robust data and technology systems** that increase efficiencies and build data and performance-driven culture across district.

Key Priorities to Drive Strategic Planning

Inform and Engage our Parents and Community at Every Level

- Strong systems of **informing and soliciting input from parents and community**
- Engage parents and community in **the academic and social growth of our students**

Develop a Powerful Vision for the Future of SPS

- More **robust strategic planning function**, data driven
- Explore opportunities to **bring more 21st century learning strategies** into the district
- Identify, articulate and develop opportunities that will **make SPS THE district of choice on the North Shore.**

Develop a Powerful Vision

Vision Statement

Vision Statement = Desired End-State

- A one-sentence statement describing the clear and inspirational long-term desired change resulting from an organization or program's work.
- The best visions are inspirational, clear, memorable, and concise.

Some Examples:

- **Oxfam:** A just world without poverty (5 words)
- **Feeding America:** A hunger-free America (4 words)
- **Human Rights Campaign:** Equality for everyone (3)
- **National Multiple Sclerosis Society:** A World Free of MS (5)
- **Habitat for Humanity:** A world where everyone has a decent place to live. (10)
- **The Nature Conservancy:** Our vision is to leave a sustainable world for future generations. (11)
- **NPR,** with its network of independent member stations, is America's pre-eminent news institution (12)
- **San Diego Zoo:** To become a world leader at connecting people to wildlife and conservation. (12)

Vision Statement Activity

- **Find a partner with whom to work**
 - Review vision statement examples
- **Working in pairs, create a powerful vision statement for the Salem Public Schools in one, brief sentence**
 - When finished, write it on the “Vision Wall”

Prompt: If Salem Public Schools were successful beyond your wildest dreams, what would that look like (described in 5-12 words or less)?

Review And Revise Mission and Core Principles

Mission Statement = What You Do/Why You Exist

- A one-sentence statement describing the reason an organization or program exists
- Should be practical, tangible
- Used to make decisions about priorities, actions, and responsibilities
- The best mission statements are clear, memorable, and concise

Some Sample Mission Statements

- **TED:** Spreading Ideas. (2 words)
- **The Humane Society:** Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty. (4)
- **Smithsonian:** The increase and diffusion of knowledge. (6 words)
- **Livestrong:** To inspire and empower people affected by cancer. (8)
- **Oxfam:** To create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice. (10)
- **The Nature Conservancy:** To conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. (11)
- **Amnesty International:** To undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights. (15)
- **Human Rights Campaign** is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. (15)
- **Feeding America:** To feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engage our country in the fight to end hunger. (22)

Core Beliefs and Commitments

Core Beliefs = Your Core Values as a SC

- Core beliefs and commitments are the conceptual starting point for the work of a school board.
- Board member beliefs about children and their capacity for learning, the purposes of public education, the school effect, and the performance potential of the school district will drive student achievement.

Mission & Core Beliefs Activity

- **Divide into 3 groups**
- **Review the following**
 - Vision Wall statements
 - Examples of district missions and core values
 - SPS 2014 mission and core principles
- **Given the vision statements, how would you revise the SPS mission and core principles?**
 - When finished, post final versions on the Mission and Core Beliefs Wall and prepare to share

SPS Mission (from 2014)

The mission of the Salem Public Schools is to provide an inclusive, high quality learning environment and experience so that all students achieve academic and personal excellence and grow their capacity to contribute positively in their local and global communities.

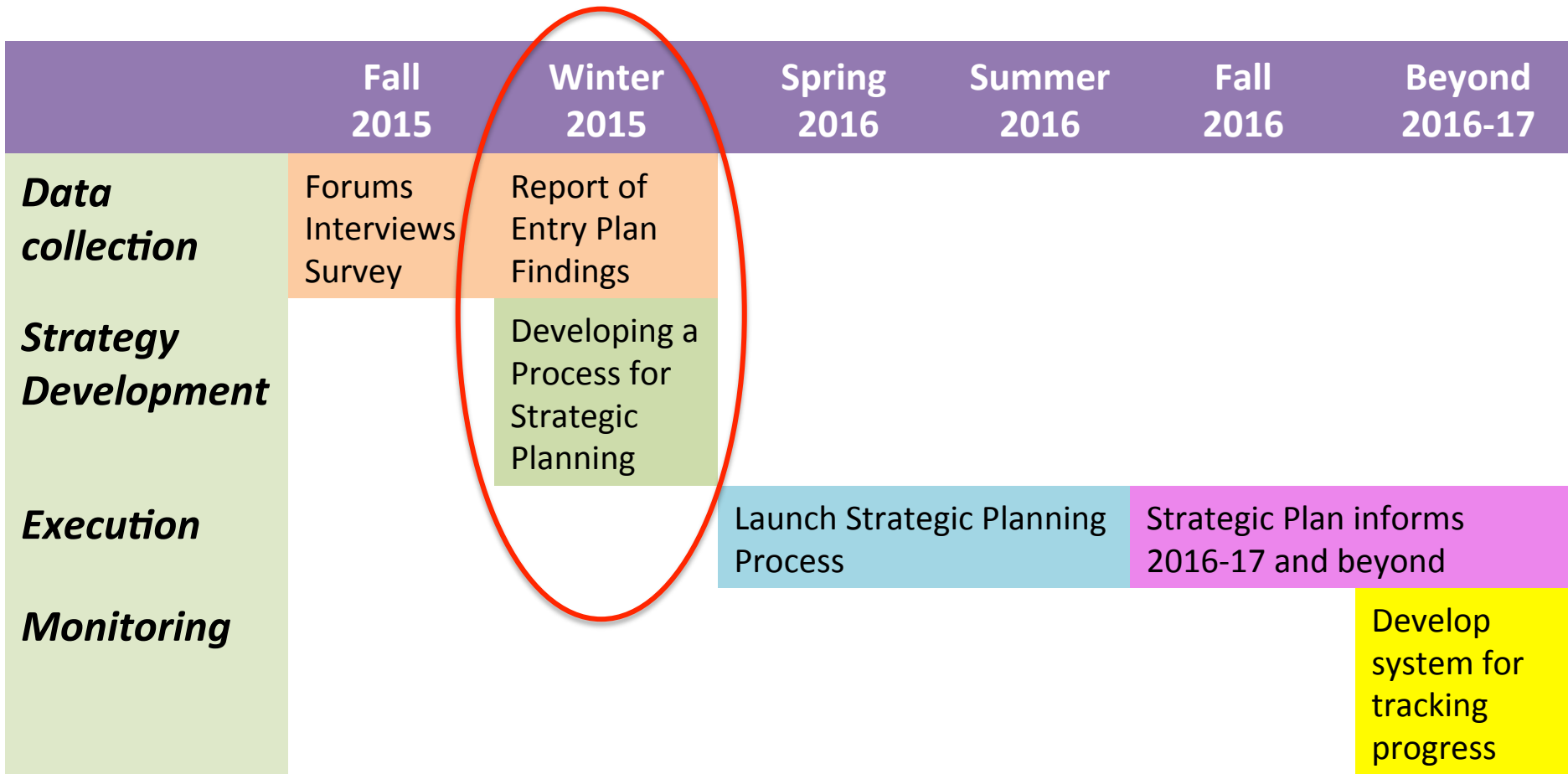
SPS Core Principles (from 2014)

- **We declare that student success and wellbeing are our top priorities**
- **We hold all students and all professionals to high standards and expectations**
- **We value all of our leaders, teachers, and students**
- **We value family and community as partners and stakeholders**
- **We value thoughtful innovation aimed at raising achievement**
- **We hold ourselves accountable for student outcomes**
- **We always work to improve educational practice and student outcomes**
- **We strive for meaningful collaboration, effective communication, and a culture of transparency**
- **We recognize and celebrate that the differences of each are assets to the whole**
- **We value that adults model integrity, respect, creativity, and accountability**

Proposed Strategic Planning Process

- **Describe handout outlining proposed strategic planning and engagement process**
- **Homework for SC Members:**
 - Review proposed process and identify any questions, strengths (things you like), concerns (things you would alter), and recommendations to improve it
 - Schedule a COW meeting to further discuss and finalize the plan

Timeline



FY17 Budget Planning Process

A Budget is...

The budget is not just a collection of numbers, but an expression of our values and aspirations.

Jacob Lew

U.S. Secretary of the Treasury

Budget to be Driven by AIP

This year, the objectives and initiatives in the AIP will drive the budget process because:

- **AIP is the district plan for SY 2015-2016**
 - **AIP objectives and initiatives are aligned with key entry findings**

AIP Objectives

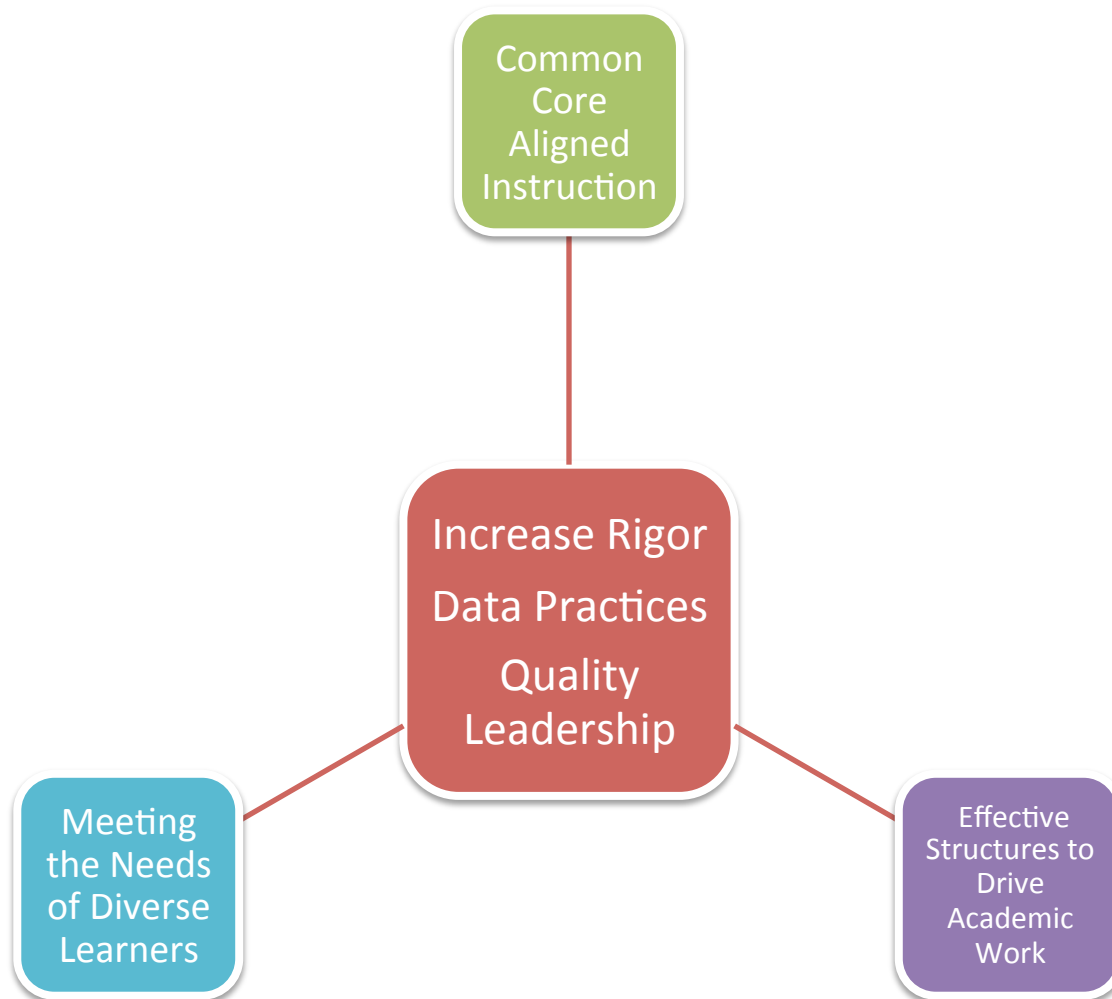


Increase
Rigor

Data Driven
Practices

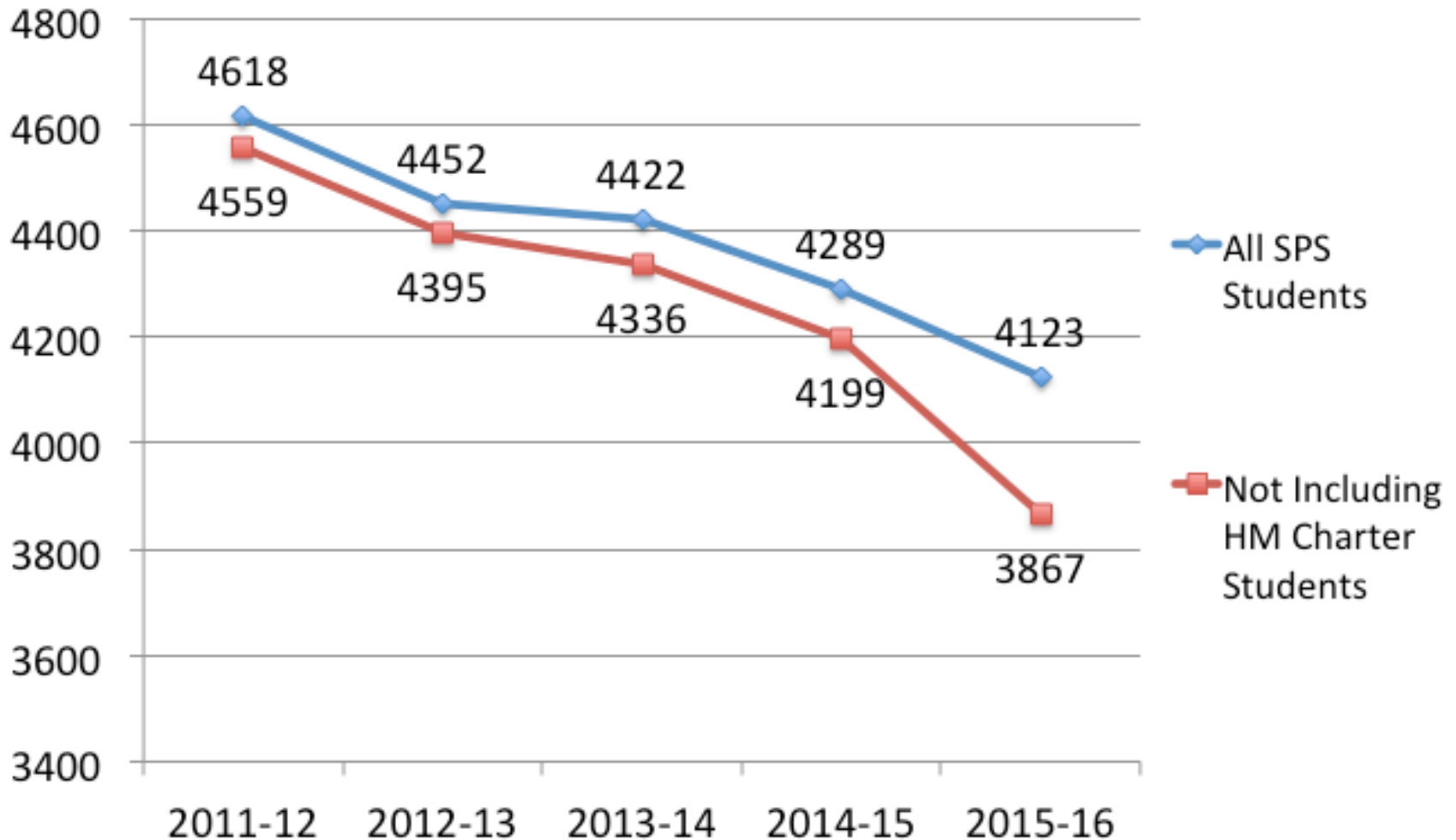
High Quality
Leadership

Initiatives for Every AIP Objective



Other factors to consider...

SPS is a district of declining enrollment



Other factors to consider...

Entry Findings Data shows:

- **Uneven resource allocation in our schools**
- **Low diversity numbers in our SPS staff**
- **Budget process is completed in Salem much later than in other districts**

AIP Driven Budget Guidelines

Focus on needs of all students. Keep students' needs at the center of all decisions in our budget.

Prioritize the support of students with the highest need in the district.

High Need Students- **“High needs” is defined by DESE as all students belonging to any of the following student subgroups: low-income, students with disabilities, English language learner/former English language learner.**

AIP Driven Budget Guidelines

Ensure transparency of rationale - Aligns with Accelerated Improvement Plan Initiatives.

Increase the alignment between allocation of resources and projected enrollment levels at the schools.

Invest in initiatives that have proven to be effective in raising student achievement.

AIP Driven Budget Guidelines

Invest in expanding the diversity in our staff and in increasing the capacity of our staff to meet the needs of diverse student populations in SPS.

Invest in infrastructure functions that will support and enhance the academic work done at our schools.

AIP Driven Budget Guidelines

Commit to a budget process timeline that will have School Committee voting to approve the budget in April 2016.

School Budgeting Process

Budget Collaborative Workshops will be conducted with all principals and key members of central office staff to support principals in building budgets that incorporate the SPS Budget Guidelines.

**Budget Collaborative Workshops:
January 25, 28, 29, 2016**

School Committee Process

Timeline:

SC meetings to discuss budget:

- 3/7/16
- 3/21/16

SC votes on Budget: 4/4/16

Budget Guidelines Feedback

Divide into four groups with your facilitator, discuss the following:

- What are the positive aspects of the guidelines?**
- What questions have these guidelines generated?**
- What do you feel is missing from the guidelines?**

Wrap Up and Next Steps

- **Next Steps and Follow up**
- **Reflection and closure**
- ***In this New Year of resolutions, what is your resolution to ensure that we have an effective strategic planning and budget planning process?***



**Accelerating Improvement in the Salem Public Schools
 Saturday, July 11, 2015, 8:00-2:00
 Salem State University, Marsh Hall, Room 210**

Retreat Goals

- Develop a shared vision for effective governance and management
- Establish norms of communication, interactions (e.g., meetings), and decision-making
- Identify top reform priorities for the year
- Begin development of strategic plans focused on each priority

Pre-Reading: Chapter 1: Why Boards Must Lead in McAdams, Donald R. (2006). *What school boards can do: Reform governance for urban schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, pp. 5-12.

NOTES from RETREAT

8:00 Arrival, greetings, and continental breakfast

8:30 Welcome, Introductions, Meeting Norms, and Ice Breaker

- Review of SPS mission and core principles

SPS MISSION

The mission of the Salem Public Schools is to provide an inclusive, high quality learning environment and experience so that all students achieve academic and personal excellence and grow their capacity to contribute positively in their local and global communities.

SPS CORE PRINCIPLES

- ❖ We declare that student success and wellbeing are our top priorities
- ❖ We hold all students and all professionals to high standards and expectations
- ❖ We value all of our leaders, teachers, and students
- ❖ We value family and community as partners and stakeholders
- ❖ We value thoughtful innovation aimed at raising achievement
- ❖ We hold ourselves accountable for student outcomes
- ❖ We always work to improve educational practice and student outcomes
- ❖ We strive for meaningful collaboration, effective communication, and a culture of transparency
- ❖ We recognize and celebrate that the differences of each are assets to the whole
- ❖ We value that adults model integrity, respect, creativity, and accountability

8:40 Effective Governance & Management: Roles of the School Committee & Superintendent

*What is effective school committee governance? What does it look like in a district that needs to accelerate improvement?
 What is effective school district management? What does it look like in a district that needs to accelerate improvement?*

Effective Governance	Effective Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not about day to day operations • It's about vision, policy, and setting direction • SC should give autonomy to Superintendent to manage the day to day work • Need to become more organized and evaluate ourselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent carries out the vision and manages the day to day work • If the SC says now, however, it's no, then move on • Superintendent should provide input and recommendations (guidance) to the SC on policies or vision

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need strong picture of priorities• Need to stay big picture• OK for SC to provide guidance to Supt on implementation (but not to other staff)• Decisions are not personal• Governance should respect the line between them and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be informed and bring recommendations to the table• Lead a thoughtful process• Be prepared and be a strong voice at the table• Be proactive in engaging SC early in the process• Management should respect the line of governance
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Some Examples of Good Governance/Management:

- There have been some “model moments” (the AIP process is an example of good collaboration bw management and governance), however, the AIP has not yet been reviewed by the SC, but pieces of it have gone to SC
- AIP came up at last minute—so also not an example in terms of proactive engagement
- Kate’s work on curriculum alignment has been good
- Increased transparency involved in this past Supt search process—this was good, it was more open, however, was still late in the game
- Similarly, the budget process—was more open, we had more outreach, but it was late in the game
 - There was a struggle to ID what the goals were and how the goals drove the budget process
 - Importance of allowing the Supt to take the SC vision to align systems and processes
 - Concerns about the role of the SC involved in too-specific line items (seemed over the line)
- We are trending toward good governance
- Development of the core principles was a good process and led to a good set of core principles
- We Need consistent alignment across initiatives, pacing—determine what can we do well, priorities and pacing

Additional Discussion on this Topic:

- Both sides should respect the line between governance and management
- Would be good to have a protocol that outlines the steps (first the superintendent develops plans, works out details, then brings to SC for deliberations and a vote)
- Need to more clearly delineate between what is just a briefing or giving information on something versus what is a vote
- Need to get ahead of the budget—be more proactive. There was a process but it started too late
- Would be nice to talk more in depth about the issues instead of always just being reactive
- SIPS needs to align with AIP
- Responsibility for alignment is with the superintendent
- Shared vision/clear goals—this is huge. We need to ensure we have consensus on this
- If we are going to take on reforms that increase student achievement seriously, we must make student learning and achievement our #1 priority
- We need to embrace accountability—it doesn’t have to be stifling. It can be designed to drive higher expectations without stifling creativity
- We need unity of purpose

9:40 **From the Field: A Governance Framework to Accelerate Improvements in SPS**

9:50 **Break**

10:00 **Working Well Together: Ensuring Effective Communication, Decision-making, and Processes**

*Review and discuss guiding principles and examples from the field
Co-construction of a framework/model for SPS*

Brief overview and presentation

Small group activity

- *There are 3 Dimensions of effective communication: 1) Superintendent to Board; 2) Board to Board; and 3) Board to Superintendent*
- *For each dimension, what strategies and practices of effective communications/process (currently in place) do you value or appreciate?*
- *What are your concerns about the communications dynamics in each of these dimensions?*
- *What are your recommendations to improve communications in each of these 3 areas?*

Report Out and Whole Group Discussion

Committee to Superintendent

- Like having 1x1 conversations between Supt and SC members to gain more knowledge
- SC members should refer constituent issues to the superintendent
- If school-based issue, SC members should recommend to constituents that they follow the chain of command before escalating to the superintendent
 - In turn, the superintendent and staff should engage with constituent issues more proactively before it reaches the SC (often constituents turn to the SC as a last resort when they are not getting responses from staff)
- Take time in public to communicate about positive things happening in the district
- It's OK to visit schools but SC members should be mindful of SC/governance role and also be sure to let the Supt know about any school visit
- SC members should also be mindful of potential to distract and get in the way when visiting schools or talking with staff
- Be mindful of tying up too much staff time
- Work toward shared agenda setting with SC and Supt (working through Supt and Chair/vice chair)
- Be more proactive and plan things out for the year
- Committee of the whole (COW) meetings are there to discuss issues and strategies
 - Some members are concerned, however, that decisions made there are out of the public eye
 - Members agree, though, that the opportunity to have richer dialogue in business meetings is limited
- Need to examine the interplay between subcommittee meetings, COW meetings, and regular business meetings
- During business meetings SC members can respond to the Supt report
- Use of subcommittees
- Avoid surprises
- Direct all communications to the superintendent
- Superintendent should attend all subcommittee meetings
-

Superintendent to Committee Communications

- Quick update emails
- Have regular communications
- Be responsive when questions arise
- Need more strategic thinking about timeline and agenda setting process
- SC wants to get information with data, background, etc. ahead of a vote (well ahead) and to have clear recommendations from the Supt with a rationale for the recommendation
- Supt should prepare SC members for votes—get materials well in advance
- Avoid surprises
- Superintendent should attend all subcommittee meetings
- No superintendent changing positions based on politics

Committee to Committee Communications

- No gotchas
- We should focus on things that drive us forward
- It's about ideas not people
- Hold each other accountable to properly discuss things in public
- When we disagree, the arguments should not continue publicly after the vote. It's done. Members should support the SC full body decisions when they are done and not "throw bombs"
 - *Not all members agreed with this*
 - *Some felt that they had a right to dissent even after a vote*
- Issue of media relations and involving the media as individual board members versus media pertaining to the whole body
- SC is a model for the citizens. SC is the voice for education and should reflect how things should be done in Salem.
- Dealing with points of tension as a committee internally versus going to the media
- This is exacerbated when decisions are made too quickly without adequate time to deliberate and to have people voice their concerns ahead of a vote

11:00 2015-16 (Draft) Reform Priorities for Salem Public Schools

Margarita shared her four reform priorities:

Priority #1: Increase Rigor in Every Classroom

Priority #2: Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

Priority #3: Build an Effective and Strategic Infrastructure that Supports Our Schools

Priority #4: Engaging Entire Community in Improving Our Schools

11:30 Developing a Strategic Plan based on the Draft Reform Priorities

For each priority, please identify and record:

- *Any feedback or deeper insights related to the priority*
- *Any questions you might have about this priority (or more information needed to better understand it)*
- *Suggested goals for the year*
- *Suggested strategies, initiatives, areas of work, and tasks*
- *Extra credit (if time): Possible measures of success (how will we know if we've reached our goals for this priority)?*

DRAFT WORKING PLANS AROUND PRIORITIES (SUGGESTED STRATEGIES)

Priority #1: Increase Rigor in Every Classroom

Areas of Agreement Reported Out:

- *Support for teachers and leaders*
- *Evaluation/accountability with observations, support, and feedback*
- *More depth to understanding of standards and how to assess*

Top Priorities for Next 6 Months Selected by Members

- **Define measures and increased rigor (clear metrics for) (4 dots)**
- **Teacher evaluation to build rigor and teacher capacity (build evaluator capacity, observation, feedback, coaching) (3 dots)**
- **Build culture around rigor—ok to be rigorous, rigorous at all levels (1 dot)**

Additional Strategies Discussed:

- Teacher orientation/mentoring
- Teacher leadership opportunities (structure)
- Strong teacher collaboration (systems and structures to support them)
- Improve report cards, align to standards and increase rigor
- ELT—effective infrastructure to support
- Celebrate success with increased rigor
- Principal—teacher—community (PD alignment)
- Acceleration opportunities (advanced courses, honors programs, etc.)
- Deeper dive on the standards
- Create principal learning community
- Create teacher leader community
- Define and re-launch our assessment strategy (need depth, multiple measures)
- Standards-based reporting
- District-based accountability and support system
- Curriculum development, rigor in all contents
- Create data system to inform decision-making

Priority #2: Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

Areas of Agreement Reported Out:

- *High expectations for all*
- *Building a culture of owning what we teach*
- *Accountability for all students and all teachers for all students (break silos down)*
- *Cultural competencies—building internal/external*
- *Diversity—celebrate the diversity of our community*

Top Priorities for Next 6 Months Selected by Members

- **Building a culture of WE teach and are accountable for all of our students (4 dots)**
- **Make collaborative structures, meaningful (curriculum, instruction, differentiation, data analysis) (1 dot)**

Additional Strategies Discussed:

- High expectations for all students
- Create community/build cultural competency
- Create structures to support differentiation and tiered instruction
- Ensure equity in opportunities (e.g., ELT, school assignment)
- Set instructional priorities (non-negotiables to support)
- Outcome—all groups have high growth
- Opportunities for acceleration (rigorously)
- SPED PAC parents are engaging them more effectively and are we providing the best supports
- Technology—leverage technology to support our diverse learners
- Digital initiatives—community partners

Priority #3: Build an Effective and Strategic Infrastructure that Supports our Schools

Areas of Agreement Reported Out:

- *Importance of implementation (and good execution of plans)*
- *Need a more strategic budgeting process*
- *Support innovation (create a culture of innovation)*
- *Have an operational plan*
- *Planning for succession*
- *Ensure communications systems are strong*

Top Priorities for Next 6 Months Selected by Members

- **Create a strategic budget process driven by mission/priorities. Start early and define school-based autonomies (3 dots)**
- **Develop strategy for recruiting, developing, retaining effective teachers and leaders (1 dot)**
- **Create a culture which supports innovation (e.g., empower people, build trust) (1 dot)**

Additional Strategies Discussed:

- Define systems that are proactive
- Ensure communication systems—school information management, grades, etc.
- Develop curriculum maps for all content (define autonomies)
- Develop a technology plan aligned with curriculum, instruction, PD, assessment
- Plan for online assessment platforms
- Create an operations plan (student fees, transportation, food services, facilities, custodians)
- Succession planning when key operations staff leave
- HR compliance

Priority #4: Engage Entire Community in Improving our Schools

Areas of Agreement Reported Out:

- *DPAC, teacher cabinet (of sorts)*
- *SIM, closing the loop between teachers and parents*
- *Better report cards—need to be clearer*
- *PIC overhaul*
- *Leverage technology*

- *Have a student representative on the SC (increase student voice)*
- *Student data*
- *Communications systems—need improvement*

Top Priorities for Next 6 Months Selected by Members

- **How to communicate better with all of our stakeholders—district newsletter, website overhaul, etc. (3 dots)**
- **Leveraging technology to communicate with families (tools—are they being used?) (1 dot)**
- **Student information management system (e.g., iParent)—improve it (1 dot)**

Additional Strategies Discussed:

- School, teachers present opportunities for parents with student data and strategies to do at home
- DPAC—set this team up for success—improve communication
- Leveraging key district partners in strategic plan
- Report cards (with supports, transparent, updated in real time, electronic)
- PIC overhaul—strategy for (community liaisons)
- Building capacity of our families (e.g., parent university)
- Build cultural competency
- Re-launch our assessment strategy
- Student representative on SC (make it meaningful)
- Increase representation of the community in schools

1:55 Wrap up and Next Steps

Discuss next steps and follow-up items

- Jill will type up the notes from the discussion and use as a basis for a draft strategic plan focused on the priorities

Reflection Activity (in one word describe how you are feeling about the shared work ahead)

- Optimistic
- Pumped up
- Excited
- Hopeful
- Inspired
- Success

2:00 Adjourn

PARKING LOT (items that came up that need more discussion in the future)

- Constituents to school committee
- Teacher cabinet (creation process, issue of representativeness, its role, etc.)
- Need to map out and plan for student assignment issue and budget



Superintendent Entry Report Salem Public Schools

Margarita Ruiz
December 21, 2015

Introduction

It was with great pleasure and anticipation that I accepted the role of Superintendent of the Salem Public Schools effective July 1, 2015. I am thankful and honored that the Salem School Committee and Mayor Kim Driscoll placed their faith in the years of experience that I bring to this opportunity. After decades of working as a teacher, school leader and area superintendent in a large district, I was given the exciting opportunity to serve the children of the city that I also call home. I couldn't be happier to partner with the leaders, staff, students, families and community members to provide all the students in Salem with the excellent education they deserve.

Salem is a vibrant, diverse and dynamic city that has seen tremendous economic growth in the past decade. However, with a designated Level 4 school district, it is the desire of the city, its leadership and all the residents, to see our schools exit the Level 4 status and become the premier school district we all know Salem can be. Our district is faced with challenges that many urban districts face: poverty, homelessness, and populations of high needs students that require their needs to be met in a variety of ways. As the Superintendent of Schools in Salem, I see that the work ahead is to deeply understand the challenges and opportunities that we have in Salem and beyond, and to engage and leverage all stakeholders in creating a strategic plan that will propel our schools towards excellence in the 21st century. Before undertaking this larger task, I knew that I must first deeply understand the challenges and learn about the work previously done in the district and the city.

To accomplish this, for the last few months, I implemented an entry plan designed to listen to multiple voices and stakeholders. This entry plan, entitled *Listening and Learning to Understand and Lead* was designed to equip me with a deep understanding of the work and context in Salem Public Schools in order to effectively develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the future. My 100-day *Listen and Learn* campaign involved multiple stakeholders and methods of data collection scheduled from July through November. This document reports the findings from this data gathering process.

The goals of the 100-day *Listening and Learning to Understand and Lead* campaign were to identify:

- What is working well?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the hopes and aspirations for the district?
- What expectations do various stakeholders have of me as the new superintendent?

Core Values

During the 29 years of my career as an educator, I have been guided by a clear set of values that have informed my work as a teacher, school leader, district administrator and now as a Superintendent. These core values have instilled in me

the belief that we must engage the community in developing and executing a strong vision of excellence for all our students.

- **Excellence for all**
 - Every one of our students, regardless of their background or learning style, deserves access to high quality education and high expectations.
- **Relationships are important**
 - Building strong relationships with staff, students, families and community partners is key to engaging them in the process of reforming and improving our schools.
- **Equal access to information and fair play; transparency**
 - Honor the importance and participation of all stakeholders, not just of some. This is the cornerstone of trust and respect.
 - Build trust by gathering and by providing accurate information in a timely manner
- **Culture of learning at all levels; reflection**
 - Create conditions for learning at both district and school level
 - Reflection sets the foundation for reform and change

Entry Plan Process

Using the aforementioned questions to guide all conversations that I had with stakeholders in our district, the following sections provide the framework that I used to organize the way I was to engage in conversations and collect data from the district:

A. One-on-One Interviews with Key Stakeholders

During one-on-one interviews, I had the opportunity to meet individuals and engage in conversations, which were guided by the questions above. Most of the conversations were informal in nature so as to encourage those being interviewed to be honest, open, and direct in their responses and about their insights into the district.

Some of the stakeholders I held interviews with to listen and learn included:

- School Committee members
- Mayor and other elected officials
- Parents
- Teachers
- Students
- Central office Staff
- Principals
- Chiefs of public safety organizations
- Salem Teachers' Union
- Salem State University and other higher education partners
- Community organizations
- Salem-based and area foundations

B. Public Forums

Public forums provided opportunities for large groups of stakeholders in the SPS community to engage in a discussion using the questions outlined above. During the forums, I met with teachers, parents and students in the district and gathered their responses to the entry questions.

C. Online Survey

An online portal where stakeholders could enter their responses was developed and added to the Salem Public Schools' website. This provided a convenient, easy to access portal that allowed for easy collection and organization of responses to the entry questions by the stakeholders who were unable to offer their input in person.

D. District Data Analysis

I also conducted an analysis of a wide array of data and information sources that included:

- MCAS and other student performance data reports to discern trends and patterns, areas of accomplishment and areas for needed focus.
- Other relevant student performance indicators, such as graduation rate and AP course enrollment, disaggregated by subgroups and programs.
- Operational and capital budgets
- AIP and other important district level documents
- Reports giving feedback regarding programs and compliance in SPS
- Human Resource management systems
- Operational functions in central office – Transportation, Parent Information Center, Food and Nutrition, Health Services, and Facilities

E. School Visits & Classroom Observations

I conducted daylong observations at each of the Salem Public Schools. These observations allowed me to gain insights as to the quality of instructional practices and implementation of the district initiatives. These visits also included conversations with the principal and key staff members with the goal of understanding the structures and systems that each school has to drive their academic agenda.

Entry Findings Analysis: Major Themes Uncovered

The process to analyze the data collected and generate findings began once all the interviews, forums and online survey data was gathered and the review of documents was completed. As each of the responses were tallied and organized during the analysis, it was clear that there was much overlap in many of the stakeholders' responses. The majority of the responses provided have been organized in five main themes or categories:

- 1. Teaching and Learning**
- 2. Communication**
- 3. Engagement**
- 4. Recruiting and Retaining Talent**
- 5. Infrastructure**
- 6. Other**

In order to organize the entry findings in relation to the questions posed to all stakeholders, each theme will be divided into two sections: **strengths** – areas that are perceived as strong practice in Salem; **opportunities for growth** – areas that are perceived as challenges and areas in need of work in the district.

Following the themes, the report outlines the main responses related to the hopes and aspirations for the district as well as the expectations of the superintendent.

1. Teaching and Learning

Strengths

- Great dedicated teachers and staff; many are from Salem and have chosen to work and remain in the city to work with our students.
- Salem Public Schools has a great music program, which is the pride of the city. The district also has good arts programs, which are supported by partners such as the Peabody Essex Museum and others.
- The increased focus and implementation of more inclusive practices at our schools.
- During the past two years, the Teaching and Learning Office has done great work in aligning the curriculum through the creation of curricular maps that are aligned with the formative assessments administered in the district.
- There have been good investments in the areas of coaches (math, ELA and science) to support and build content knowledge among our teachers.
- Salem Public Schools offers high quality professional development for teachers both at the district and school level.
- Salem Public Schools has a variety of high quality special education programs, services, and has established schools (Salem Prep High School and Early Childhood Center) that provide specialized instruction and support to students with various disabilities in the district.
- Salem Public Schools has developed and continues to improve the structure for data analysis in all our schools through partnership with ANet.
- Salem Public Schools is currently implementing the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (**PBIS**) approach in all our schools to establish behavioral supports and positive school culture needed for all students' social, emotional and academic success.
- Extended learning time has been implemented in four schools in the district, Collins, Bowditch, Saltonstall and Bentley Academy.
- Salem Public Schools offers a variety of good after school programs.

Opportunities for Growth

- There is a lack of effective training and support for the instruction of English language learners in the district.
- Lack of rigor in the instruction; lack of challenging curriculum.
- Many confuse rigor with rigid instruction devoid of creativity.

- Many teachers in the district struggle with differentiating instruction for the diverse learners in their classrooms. Many teachers lack strategies to address high needs students.
- There is often more than one adult in class to support high needs students yet their efforts are often not coordinated and focused resulting in high needs students not having their instructional needs met.
- There are pockets in the district where there is no consistency in the instructional practices of the teachers.
- Not enough time in the instructional day for social studies and science.
- The district lacks a strategy to increase the quality of early childhood education (Kindergarten).
- There has been a lot of focus on students who are struggling to meet proficiency but not enough focus on the high achievers in the classroom.
- There is a perception of excessive testing and a narrowing of the curriculum.
- Low ranking on test scores.

2. Communication

Strengths

- There is great desire from parents, teachers and community members to receive information about what is happening in the district.
- Many schools and PTOs are leveraging social media to communicate with their stakeholders about events and other information related to students.
- Many parents and members of the community take to social media to discuss issues related to education in our schools.

Opportunities for Growth

- Parents, teachers and community members express frustration with the lack of communication from the district.
- Central office staff reports not having enough communication internally about the work being done by other functions in the district. Work is done in silos.
- Salem Public Schools have a public perception problem; many people outside the district have a negative sentiment toward the district.
- It is difficult to get local newspapers to highlight the very positive things happening in SPS.
- Lack of effective/updated infrastructure to support communication: outdated, unhelpful website; ineffective and inconsistent use of social media; lack district publications that promote the programs and strengths of the district.

3. Engagement

Strengths

- There is strong support for our schools from parents; the majority of our schools have active PTOs in place.

- There is also strong support from many organizations in Salem. The Salem Partnership's Community Advisory Board and, the recently organized, Salem Public Schools Partnership Collaborative include partners from the business, higher education and social and medical agencies, all willing to support SPS.
- Salem State University has been a long time partner of the district providing training opportunities for our teachers and SSU students as well as learning support for our students through summer learning opportunities.

Opportunities for Growth

- While many schools have PTOs that are active in fundraising and developing events for the school, many parents express the desire to have workshops and information on how to support their children with their academic work at home. Many feel our schools are not doing enough to build the capacity of our parents to support their children with new, more challenging curriculum they are not familiar with (i.e. math)
- Some parents, especially those speaking other languages and coming from other cultures, do not feel welcomed at some of our schools and by other parents in the district. Many are frustrated by the school's inability to provide information or accommodate meetings about their children in a timely manner in their language.
- Many members of PTOs across the district express their frustration with their inability to consistently engage parents of different cultural and linguistics backgrounds. The overall opinion expressed by most parents is that the district should have a strategy and resources to support effective parent engagement in the district.
- We have many families leaving the district. Many leave because they are not confident that their children will get a first class education in Salem.

4. Recruiting, Developing and Retaining Talent Strengths

- The number one strength expressed throughout all of my entry conversations was the fact that Salem Public Schools has highly dedicated teachers and staff. Nearly all stakeholders who attended forums, were interviewed or entered their responses online expressed the same sentiment about our teachers.
- School Committee conducted a highly inclusive and effective process to solicit feedback and input from the community during the superintendent search for the district last school year.
- All our schools have Assistant Principals, instructional coaches, full time nurses, student support personnel that guide and support teaching and learning. The great majority of our classrooms have between 2 to 3 adults on the average working with students in any given period.

- SPS launched the Teacher Leaders Initiative in the 2015-2016 school year with the goal of increasing leadership opportunities for our teachers.

Opportunities for Growth

- The district has a challenge with retaining teachers. Each summer a large number of teachers either leave current positions or decline job offers to work in other districts with higher pay.
- The hiring process for teachers in Salem takes place too late in the year. The height of hiring season takes place in the early summer after the SPS budget has been approved. This greatly hinders SPS capacity to be competitive with other districts, which complete these processes much earlier and are able to recruit top talent for their schools.
- Staff morale is low. Teachers have felt unappreciated and not valued by the district and city. They feel the Level 4 status brought a lot of pressure and blame on teachers and not enough support. The Bentley “take-over” and later conversion into an in-district Horace Mann Charter further lowered morale and prompted a lot of turnover of teachers.
- While the student population is very diverse, there is very low diversity in the teacher and staff ranks. Very few are bilingual educators, especially in Spanish.

5. Infrastructure

Strengths

- Buildings in Salem Public Schools are in great condition.
- Many classrooms in the district have been outfitted with wall-mounted projectors and many have SMART boards which teachers and students can access. Every school has a relatively newer computer lab.
- Salem Public Schools has a great breakfast program and meals that are prepared fresh and onsite at each of our schools.
- The SPS Student Assignment process provides families choice among the diverse schools and offerings in the district.

Opportunities for Growth

- **Human Resources** – Hiring processes begin too late in the season, are reactive rather than driven by a proactive strategy, are not clear; are paper dependent and as a result difficult to extract data to inform recruitment strategies. The process to onboard new employees is a manual process by which paper is sent to several offices within the organization (Benefits, Payroll and back to HR), which involves duplicative efforts and many inefficiencies. No online systems to support and expedite this process.
- **Budget Process** – The allocation of resources is not guided by a clear set of priorities that directly relate to the priority needs of the district. This lack of focus on priorities makes difficult fiscal decisions a challenge to support and explain to stakeholders. The late timeline for budgets in Salem seriously

impacts the district's ability to hire top talent for our schools. Resources are unevenly distributed across the schools. Schools with the highest needs students do not necessarily receive more resources to support their work.

- **Communication** – See Section #2
- **Parent Information Center** - PIC serves primarily as the registration center for the district, but lacks a parent engagement function or strategy. See Section #3.

6. Other Strengths

- The diversity of the city and the student population was the number one strength identified by the vast majority of stakeholders who provided feedback during the entry process.
- There is a shared desire in the Salem community for the schools to improve.
- Salem has a demonstrated openness to innovation; has two Horace Mann charter schools (New Liberty and Bentley Academy) and one Innovation School (Carlton).

Opportunities for Growth

- The district lacks a vision to strive for and guide the work. This results in many initiatives that give many staff the feeling that they are working toward different directions and there is constant change in programs.
- There is lack of cultural proficiency among many staff members in the district.

Hopes and Aspirations for Salem Public Schools

- To be the best, highly rated district in MA (promoted by realtors). To be a highly chosen district by families looking for a world-class education for their children.
- Restore the pride in our schools.
- Become a vibrant school district that inspires the love of learning in all students.
- Develop and promote a strong vision for the future that unites the work and efforts of all our stakeholders.
- To be an inclusive district where all diverse populations feel welcomed, respected and celebrated.
- To be a district of high expectations for all students. To ensure college and career readiness for all.
- Increased academic achievement for all student populations in SPS. We must have trust that the needs of ALL students are being met.
- Ensure that we have a rigorous curriculum that also focuses on teaching the whole child.
- Attract and retain great teachers, leaders and staff to our district.

- Ensure high levels of collaboration across all stakeholders. School leaders to collaborate more with the community.
- Better leadership and communication from the administration in SPS.
- Develop a better budget process that aims to allocate resources based on the needs of students, thus reducing inequities across the system.

Expectations of the New Superintendent

- Build consensus and a shared vision for the district.
- Continue reaching out to parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the district and to listen to and consider their input.
- Provide regular, clear and consistent communication to all in Salem Public Schools and beyond.
- Raise the bar; insist on high expectations for all.
- Exhibit courageous, passionate leadership.
- Have accountability for results at all levels.
- Be visible; visit schools frequently.
- Improve our schools; restore our sense of pride in Salem Public Schools.
- Be a transparent leader who develops a culture of trust and respect at all levels.
- Foster better, more positive connections with minority communities, parents, teachers and our community in general.

Planning for Now and the Future

Now, shifting toward the future, it is clear that these findings point us in the direction we need to focus our efforts on in the coming months and years. Some of the findings reinforce work that is already well underway in the district and others provide a starting point for longer-term planning and efforts. Moving forward, we will continue to focus on implementation of the Accelerated Improvement Plan in the near-term and begin to develop a long-term strategic planning process in other areas. The entry plan findings tell us that our district strategic planning process should include the following key priorities:

1. Ensure Learning and Growth for Every Student, Every Day

- Focused, Effective, and Engaging Instruction to Prepare All Students for Success in 21st Century College and Careers
- Increase rigor
- Meeting needs of diverse learners

2. Strengthen Our Infrastructure to Ensure Support for Schools and to Develop Strategies for the Future

- Stronger HR systems and strategy to effectively recruit, develop, and retain talent in our district

- More strategic and transparent budgeting process to distribute resources to schools based on student need
- Robust data and technology systems that increase efficiencies and build a data- and performance-driven culture across the district

3. Inform and Engage Our Parents and Community at Every Level

- Develop and implement systems of informing and soliciting input from stakeholders, leveraging print and social media and other forms of contact
- Engage parents and community in the academic and social growth of our students

4. Develop a Powerful Vision and Strategic Plan for the Future

- Develop a more robust strategic planning function, data-driven
- Exploring opportunities to bring more 21st century learning strategies into the district
- Identify, articulate, and develop the strategic opportunities that will make Salem Public Schools **THE** district of choice on the North Shore

In the coming weeks, we will develop an engagement strategy to include all interested staff, students and parents and community members in the development of a long-term strategic plan for the district. This work will include articulation of a vision statement, the identification of district core values, and long term strategic goals for Salem Public Schools will be developed. The goals generated by these groups will lead the Leadership Team and staff of Salem Public Schools into action planning and objective setting. Altogether, this will be the roadmap that will ensure that we are well on our way to success for all students and families in Salem.

Timeline for Strategic Planning

	Fall 2015	Winter 2015	Spring 2016	Summer 2016	Fall 2016	Beyond 2016-17
Data collection	Forums Interviews Survey	Report of Entry Plan Findings				
Strategy Development		Developing a Process for Strategic Planning				
Execution			Launch Strategic Planning Process		Strategic Plan informs 2016-17 and beyond	
Monitoring						Develop system for tracking progress

Acknowledgment

Thanks to the New Superintendents Induction Program (NSIP) for their support, guidance and continued mentorship during the first year of my tenure as superintendent of Salem. NSIP is collaboration between the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS).

This entry plan findings report format was, in part, informed by the following entry reports:

Swampscott Public Schools
Pamela Angelakis, Superintendent

Weymouth Public Schools
Kenneth N. Salim, Ed.D., Superintendent

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From: McAdams, Donald R. (2006).
What School Boards Can Do:
Reform Governance for Urban
Schools. New York, NY. Teacher's
College Press.

CHAPTER 1

Why Boards Must Lead

WHO IS IN CHARGE of America's urban schools? Everyone and no one. We Americans love divided government. Distrustful of power, we established a constitution with three branches of government, each designed to check the power of the others.

We have done the same thing with our schools. What could be more important than our children? Who can we trust to be in charge? We have diffused power over schools to state legislatures, to school districts, to the federal government, to state and federal courts, and de facto to education professionals and teacher unions. Diffused power is great for preserving stability; it makes change almost impossible.

No center of power stands alone. Education reform requires systemic alignment. In the long run, state legislatures are in control. They make the laws and provide resources. Legislatures can create a framework and, most of the time, keep things from happening, but it is difficult for them to make things happen. Among the centers of power, school districts are the units that can most powerfully and quickly create good schools for all children in a community.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Until recently, most educational reformers overlooked school districts. The focus was on state policy and schools. School finance, state standards and accountability systems, state regulations of teacher preparation and compensation, whole-school design, curriculum, professional development, classroom management, and so on—these were the keys to improving student achievement.

The work of the past decade is substantial. The nation is now focused on improving schools, especially urban schools. State policy frameworks are far more focused and robust than 10 years ago and, thanks to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, are likely to become more so. We have a rich literature on teaching and learning, professional development, school performance, and a growing number of examples of high-performing urban schools. Nevertheless, improvements in student achievement are minimal, especially

at the high school level, and the achievement gap remains large and almost unchanged.

In recent years, researchers and policy makers have realized they must turn their attention to school districts, especially large urban districts. These districts educate a disproportionate number of American children, particularly children of color and those from low-income backgrounds. Sixty-four of America's urban districts, those districts that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools, compose less than 1% of all districts but enroll 15% of the nation's public school children and about 32% of the nation's English-language learners. Nearly 70% of the students in these districts are African American or Hispanic, and 62% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Council of the Great City Schools, 2002).

Most of these districts are in crisis. In 2003, only 48% of fourth graders in America's central city schools demonstrated at least basic mastery of reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), with some urban districts registering rates as low as 31%. This is compared with 62% of fourth graders nationwide (NAEP, 2003). By the time these students reach high school, many are struggling to stay engaged and do not succeed. Graduation rates consistently paint a bleak picture for America's largest urban districts, where too often fewer than 50% of ninth graders graduate from high school 4 years later (Balfanz & Lergers, 2004; Swanson & Chaplin, 2003).

What is required to transform these districts into high-performing organizations that educate all children to high levels? The research base is still thin, but increasingly, researchers can identify the characteristics of a high-performing school district. And districts such as Houston, Long Beach, Garden Grove (California), Norfolk, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Aldine (Texas) have shown that entire districts, not just schools, can significantly improve student achievement. Where this has been done, district leadership has acted to redesign the system.

David Tyack's (1974) classic history of urban education, *The One Best System*, has given a name to the prevailing design of urban districts, a design created by administrative progressives in the early decades of the 20th century to Americanize the children of immigrants and prepare children for jobs in the American workplace. The workplace of about 1920 needed mostly skilled and unskilled labor. The public schools obliged. Following the principles of scientific management, administrative progressives adapted the factory model to educate and sort children for the workplace.

Just as manufacturing was standardized and consolidated, so was education. Children were grouped by age; learning was measured by hours of instruction; and children were sorted into college prep or vocational tracks, based all too often on gender, class, and race. Small school districts were consolidated into larger ones, and professional educators assumed responsi-

bility for management. Governance was placed in the hands of smaller boards of education, elected on nonpartisan ballots in special elections and disproportionately representing the city's elite.

Much has changed since the 1920s. As have other public institutions, urban districts have evolved to keep pace with changing demographics, public values, social norms, business methods, and educational research; and there have been huge variations in time and place. Still, much has remained the same.

Most school districts still group children by age, assign them to classes, and move them lockstep through the traditional school day and year. Instruction is not designed to bring all children to standard; rather, children are given the opportunity to learn as much as they can in the time allotted and then moved on to the next subject or grade. Schools are the units of instruction, with little collaboration among schools. In many cases, teachers are free to close the doors to their classrooms and teach what they want, how they want. School districts manage schools in geographic areas, within which they have a monopoly on public education. Central Office assigns children to schools based on geographic attendance boundaries, assigns teachers based frequently on seniority, allocates resources based on staffing patterns, and controls school operations. Principals are middle managers who carry out Central Office directives under the supervision of assistant and deputy superintendents. And Central Office manages a massive business infrastructure, which provides the full range of business services to schools (Cuban, 1993; Cuban & Tyack, 1995; Mirel, 1999; Ravitch, 2000; Ravitch & Vinovskis, 2000; Stone, 1998).

However well the one best system met the needs of industrializing America, it was at root immoral, for it discriminated against girls, poor children, and children of color. It may have met the civil rights standards of the 1920s. It does not meet the civil rights standards of today.

And it no longer meets the needs of the workplace. Good jobs in today's global information economy require high school and more. Today's districts must educate all children to high levels, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is essential for our economy and our democracy.

The 20th-century model cannot do this. No matter how well it is managed, no matter how much it is fine-tuned, the 20th-century model will not educate all children to high levels. It was not designed for this purpose. What is needed, and what is being attempted in the most successful urban districts, is fundamental redesign of the system.

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP

Clearly, superintendents alone cannot transform urban districts, but everywhere districts have improved, strong superintendents have pushed comprehensive

reform agendas. For this reason, and also because executive leadership is highly visible, many see superintendents as the key to urban school reform. Researchers have given considerable attention to the leadership role of superintendents and the obstacles that impede their ability to improve districts. High on the list of obstacles are school boards (Class, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Not surprisingly, one of the two major strategies used in the past decade to improve executive leadership is to place districts under the control of mayors. Superintendents accountable to boards appointed by mayors are thought to have greater freedom to exercise executive power. The other strategy is to appoint nontraditional superintendents with strong executive backgrounds in business or the military.

Is executive leadership critical? Absolutely. Superintendents are the people who lead school districts, just as generals are the people who command troops and fight wars. Reform boards are helpless without reform superintendents.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

The opposite is also true. Reform superintendents cannot succeed without reform boards—or reform governance power in whatever form it takes—standing behind them. In the successful districts mentioned above, all led by strong reform superintendents, strong reform boards worked as partners with the superintendent. This issue, the relationship between boards and superintendents, is at the heart of urban school reform.

We live in a democracy, and in a democracy the people must control their public institutions. We accomplish this by direct and indirect democratic control. We directly elect some executives: the president, governors, mayors, and so on. These elected officials, assisted by appointed officers, manage. They also govern, but their governance power is shared with legislative and judicial bodies. This is the American system of checks and balances.

We control other institutions through indirect democratic control. Elected officials appoint boards, which in turn appoint executives. For example, governors appoint university boards of regents, which in turn select university presidents.

Most school districts operate under direct democratic control; an elected board appoints the superintendent and has budget authority, some taxing authority, and ownership and responsibility for facilities and everything else. Although constrained by federal and state law, the board is the trustee for the people and directly governs the district. In many districts, boards share some governance power—especially budget and taxing authority—with city councils or other local elected bodies, and in some districts board members are appointed.

Even in districts where the board is appointed, however, board members are usually expected to pay close attention to parents and other constituents and have the final say on district policies. By design, legislatures have placed school districts as close as possible to the people they serve.

However we govern our schools, three points are clear: Governance springs directly or indirectly from the people; governance is always shared; and governance must control management. This is because our democracy has been designed to reflect the will of the majority, protect the rights of the minority, and check the exercise of power.

SCHOOL BOARDS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

School boards and superintendents are partners, but they are not equal partners. Boards govern. Superintendents manage. Governance always trumps management. Governance is the trusteeship of power on behalf of the owners of power; management is the exercise of power under the oversight of governance.

Governance is difficult to define, which is one reason there is so much confusion about it. That is why I have written this book, to provide an extended definition of governance for reform school boards. Simply put, governance is steering; management is rowing. Governance is deciding what is to be done; management is doing it. In a democracy, governance must be broadly shared. Management responsibility needs to be concentrated in individuals.

School boards govern; superintendents manage. But school boards do not govern alone. They share the powers of governance with state legislatures, the federal government, and the courts. The superintendent, because of his or her involvement in policy development, is also part of the governance team, though in a subordinate role. The board of education is the dominant partner in governance.

The board has the responsibility to establish core beliefs, create the vision, set goals, formulate a theory of action for change, direct and participate in the development of policies, approve policies, allocate resources, oversee policy implementation and the effectiveness of management systems, mediate between the district and the public, and look far into the future. To the extent boards abandon these responsibilities to superintendents, they cede their governance power.

Superintendents assume governance power for many reasons: because their boards lack the knowledge or the will to exercise it, because they believe they must combine governance and management power in order to effect change, or because they seek power for its own sake. For whatever reason, it is a mistake.

Indeed, many reform voices urge the concentration of power in the hands of superintendents. The move to mayoral control of urban districts happens not just because policy makers believe education is integral to the success of a city and must be aligned with the other functions of city government; it occurs also, perhaps primarily, because policy makers believe that elected boards bring personal and special interest agendas to the board table, micromanage, and make it almost impossible for superintendents to manage.

Sadly, this is often the case, and one of the reasons such cities as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, and Boston, to name some of the most well-known cities with appointed boards, have chosen this governance model. Indeed, Boston superintendent Thomas Payzant confirms:

One of the qualities that attracted me to work in Boston was that a school board appointed by the mayor meant that the "stars were in alignment" and that I would be able to focus on instructional reform rather than political issues. (Personal communication, January 3, 2005)

It is universally recognized that in crisis situations power needs to be concentrated. Given the condition of many urban districts, concentrating power in the hands of a powerful superintendent such as Tom Payzant makes sense. It also makes sense to subordinate the services provided to children. Management, however, is not governance. Whether the governance is in the hands of the mayor, as it is in effect in New York and Chicago; an appointed board, as it is in Philadelphia; or an elected board, governance power should not be given to the superintendent. Concentrated executive power, yes; governance power, no.

No city can allow one person to establish core beliefs, create a vision, set goals, formulate a theory of action for change, develop a policy framework, and so forth. These decisions must reflect the community, and they cannot be changed every time a new superintendent comes to town. Imagine establishing new policies regarding magnet schools, charter schools, outsourcing, district accountability systems, funding formulas, variable or merit pay, and personnel evaluations every time a new superintendent came to town. No district can change course every 3 or even every 10 years.

All superintendents are transitional. Most urban superintendents are from out of town. They come for a season to provide executive leadership, and then move on, serving only 5 years on average (Glass et al., 2000; Natkin et al., 2002). Only with good fortune can a city keep a strong superintendent for the 10 or more years required to transform a district's systems and culture. Boards, whether elected or appointed, reflect the needs and culture of their community; and because they are likely to turn over a few members at a time, they provide structure and policy stability.

The almost revolutionary changes required to redesign urban school districts are not just management changes. They cannot be accomplished in a few years, and they cannot be accomplished without broad community support. Only boards, because of the democratic power they derive from the people, because of their close links with the people, and because of their stability, can provide the leadership required to redesign and sustain over decades school districts that provide equity and results for all children.

That most have not chosen to do so is not an argument for stripping them of their power. Rather, it is an argument for showing them how to exercise their power. The failure of urban boards is really the failure of democracy. The cure is not the diminution of democracy; it is the renewal of democratic power.

Nothing stated so far is intended to justify the dysfunctional behavior and lack of reform leadership on the part of many urban boards or to weaken the power of superintendents. Indeed, reform boards need strong superintendents—the stronger, the better.

As American Enterprise Institute scholar Frederick M. (Rick) Hess, one of the nation's leading authorities on school boards, puts it:

Reform boards that try to work through cautious, skeptical, or unenthusiastic superintendents are trying to row against the tide. District leadership will prove balky enough, even with a committed superintendent. Trying to drag along a large, bureaucratic organization and its top executives is a task beyond the ken of even the most effective reform board. (Personal communication, December 21, 2004)

Under the best of circumstances, the urban superintendency is not a job for the weak, unfocused, or indecisive. Only the best and brightest are likely to be successful reform superintendents. Strong boards do not imply weak superintendents. Power is not a zero-sum game.

What districts need are strong reform board—superintendent teams: boards that provide leadership for reform through vision, goals, policy, and astute politics; and superintendents empowered to manage for excellence. In this partnership, the superintendent will do most of the work. He or she is the chief executive officer and the only person who can create a new organizational culture. The board, however, will do the most important work, for governance makes possible management, not the other way around.

Julian Treviño, board president in the San Antonio Independent School District, puts it this way:

Boards have ultimate responsibility, for boards choose superintendents, not the other way around. Selecting a superintendent is the

most important decision a board makes. Knowing the work that needs to be done, reform boards select the strongest reform leader they can find: the stronger the superintendent, the stronger the board. (Personal communication, December 24, 2004)

Creating high-performance urban school districts that educate all children to high levels should be the nation's number one educational priority. Without strong superintendents and strong boards working together to redesign urban districts, this cannot be done. Reform governance describes this work.

Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide

Overview

Purpose of the Law

The purpose of the Open Meeting Law is to ensure transparency in the deliberations on which public policy is based. Because the democratic process depends on the public having knowledge about the considerations underlying governmental action, the Open Meeting Law requires, with some exceptions, that meetings of public bodies be open to the public. It also seeks to balance the public's interest in witnessing the deliberations of public officials with the government's need to manage its operations efficiently.

AGO Authority

The Open Meeting Law was revised as part of the 2009 Ethics Reform Bill, and now centralizes responsibility for statewide enforcement of the law in the Attorney General's Office (AGO). G.L. c. 30A, § 19 (a). To help public bodies understand and comply with the revised law, the Attorney General has created the Division of Open Government. The Division of Open Government provides training, responds to inquiries, investigates complaints, and when necessary, makes findings and takes remedial action to address violations of the law. The purpose of this Guide is to inform elected and appointed members of public bodies, as well as the interested public, of the basic requirements of the law.

Certification

Within two weeks of a member's election or appointment or the taking of the oath of office, whichever occurs later, all members of public bodies must complete the attached Certificate of Receipt of Open Meeting Law Materials certifying that they have received these materials, and that they understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and the consequences for violating it. The certification must be retained where the body maintains its official records. All public body members should familiarize themselves with the Open Meeting Law, the Attorney General's regulations, and this Guide.

In the event a Certificate has not yet been completed by a member of a public body, the member should complete and submit the Certificate at the earliest opportunity to be considered in compliance with the law.

Open Meeting Website

This Guide is intended to be a clear and concise explanation of the Open Meeting Law's requirements. The complete law, as well as the Attorney General's regulations, training materials, advisory opinions and orders can be found on the Attorney General's Open Meeting website, <http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting>. Local and state

CERTIFICATE OF RECEIPT OF OPEN MEETING LAW MATERIALS

I, _____, who qualified for the office of
(Name)

_____, on _____, certify pursuant
(Office) (Date)

to G.L. c. 30A, § 20(g), that I have received copies of the following Open Meeting Law materials:

- 1) the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25;
- 2) regulations promulgated by the Attorney General under G.L. c. 30A, § 25; and
- 3) educational materials promulgated by the Attorney General under G.L. c. 30A, § 19(b), explaining the Open Meeting Law and its application.

I have read and understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and the consequences for violating it. I further understand that the materials I have received may be revised or updated from time to time, and that I have a continuing obligation to implement any changes in the Open Meeting Law during my term of office.

(Name)

(Name of Public Body)

(Date)

Pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 20(g), an executed copy of this certificate shall be retained, according to the relevant records retention schedule, by the appointing authority, city or town clerk, or the executive director or other appropriate administrator of a state or regional body, or their designee.