

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent

Memorandum

To: Members of the School Committee
From: Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Date: October 2, 2015
Re: Superintendent's Entry Plan: 2015/16 Focus Areas

Over the past two months, as I have transitioned from Lowell to Chelmsford, I have met many staff, parents, students, and community members truly interested in supporting the work of the school system to give our students the best education possible. The Chelmsford school community has welcomed me to the district, and I feel privileged to work with you in the coming years as superintendent. I do not take the opportunity to lead this district lightly. At the start of my career I taught at Chelmsford High School in the Business Department. I am glad to be back at work in this district with an outstanding group of dedicated educators.

My management style is one of collaboration grounded in open and honest communication. A school district's success rests largely on the collective leadership of the school committee, superintendent, and building principals charged with carrying out clearly articulated objectives based on the beliefs and values of the greater school community. I believe it is critical to support teachers, who work hard to foster their students' growth and development while implementing an ever-increasing number of mandates; truly, it is the work of teachers that makes the difference for students. To advance a school system over time requires a collective effort and relentless pursuit of excellence, assessment of one's practice, and continual learning. I look forward to working with you and the greater Chelmsford community as we build on past successes in the district and make the Chelmsford Public Schools the best public school system in the state.

It is important to note the significant turnover in administration that has occurred in the past few months. We are fortunate to have hired Michelle Cresta as our Director of Business and Finance. Michelle began her work in the district this past July and is experienced in town and school finance. We are also very fortunate that Carol Fredette agreed to return from retirement to help us administer special education programs this year and to help us advertise and recruit for a permanent replacement to fill this critical role in the district. Therefore, half the administrative team is new to the district for the 2015/16 school year as Carol, Michelle, and I join Linda Hirsch, Anne-Marie Fiore, and Ken Storlazzi, who have been in their roles in the district for some time.

[Entry Plan Phase 1: Listening and Learning](#)

In the entry plan outlined here I will lay out the process I'll use to guide me in developing an understanding of the Chelmsford Public Schools, its strengths, and its

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

challenges. I intend to accomplish this goal systematically and to keep the school committee, parents, and staff informed of my findings along the way. In the first five months (August to December) of my tenure I will listen and learn about the community's values, norms, and expectations. This process will include individual interviews with school committee members, administrators, teachers, and support staff. I will meet with parents individually and in groups (i.e., Council of Schools, individual PTOs) as well as with students to understand what they want and need from the district. I may conduct focus groups and surveys to collect feedback from stakeholder groups to obtain a broad perspective on the district. I will also review relevant documents to provide data to assess the current state of district programs. In Phase 1 I plan to review and analyze the following documents:

- District strategic plan 2012 to 2017
- District improvement plan
- School improvement plans
- Annual town reports
- Policy and procedures manuals
- Employee handbook
- Staff (individual) evaluation reports
- District and school professional development plans
- Elementary, middle, and high school student handbooks
- Budget documents, presentations, and reports
- Student enrollment projections and trends
- Student performance and demographic data
- School committee meeting agendas and minutes
- Collective bargaining agreements
- Nonaffiliated (individual) employment contracts
- Building capital, maintenance, and technology plans
- Emergency incident/management plans

[Entry Plan Phase 2: Analyzing Data & Sharing Information](#)

For the next three months (January to March of 2016), I'll work with district and school administrators to analyze the information collected in Phase 1 to identify significant trends and themes in the data. A draft report of my findings will be developed and shared with key stakeholders to gain initial feedback. A final report will be shared with the community at large and will identify the strengths of the district as well as the areas requiring improvement.

[Entry Plan Phase 3: Establishing a Plan of Action](#)

The final phase of the entry plan will be to formulate a plan of action for the district based on the findings from Phases 1 and 2. This plan will help the district move forward with a shared vision for student learning in the Chelmsford Public Schools. A

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

focus of our work in each phase will be to think and act strategically to concentrate our efforts on high-yield initiatives focused on teaching, learning, and building capacity among staff to improve each student's academic performance and social and emotional well-being.

To that end, I have identified three focus areas for my work during the 2015/16 school year to parallel the entry plan. The three focus areas are as follows:

- 1) A comprehensive review and assessment of the district's 5-Year Plan initiated in 2012. The 2015/16 school year marks year 4 of the plan implementation, and so it is necessary to review the plan to determine its effectiveness and the level of cohesiveness between the outlined mission, its vision, and the theory of action on one hand and the strategic objectives and initiatives identified in the plan. This review and assessment will culminate in a report published next summer and adoption of a new strategic plan to guide the work of the district in its next phase of growth and development.
- 2) A comprehensive assessment of the district's school facilities to identify school building repair projects—both required and desired—in the coming years. Work will focus on shaping an enhanced vision for the district, setting goals and values for the study, conducting and analyzing long-range student enrollment projections, and evaluating the existing conditions in our 8 primary school buildings. The assessment will incorporate discussions of desired educational programming, grade level configurations, school feeder patterns, and a number of planning options to be reviewed and evaluated by school staff, community members, and the school committee. The result of the comprehensive facilities assessment will be a ten-year capital plan identifying and prioritizing immediate as well as short- and long-term priorities, with baseline repair cost estimates and new building construction cost estimates.
- 3) A review and response to the findings and recommendations from the recent Melanson and Heath report, Powers and Sullivan financial audits, and the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) report. This will include a review of compliance with current school committee policy and procedure manuals as well as review and refinement of current procedure manuals in all departments of the central administration office.

To assist me as I begin my tenure as superintendent of Chelmsford Public Schools, I will be participating in the New Superintendent's Induction Program sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). I am pleased to report that my assigned coach, Karla Brooks Baehr, Ed.D., is someone I have worked with and whom I greatly respect for her many contributions to education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Dr. Baehr retired in 2011 from DESE as Deputy Commissioner of Accountability, Assistance and

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Partnerships. I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Baehr when she was superintendent in Lowell. Dr. Baehr has also served as superintendent in Wellesley and interim superintendent in Lexington and Franklin. Dr. Baehr will be present from time to time at school committee, leadership, and school meetings to view my interactions with school committee members and district staff. Once again, I'd like to say how happy I am to be back in the Chelmsford School District. I look forward to working with you all.