



AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ENGAGE • EMPOWER • INSPIRE

Creating Connections: Austin 90 Day Entry
Plan

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Purpose of Creating Connections – 90

Austin Days

The purpose of my listening, learning, and orientating activities is to learn as much about the Austin Public Schools as possible. Additionally, a primary goal is to meet as many of the stakeholders as possible during onboarding and beyond. Connections will be made with the constituents to learn their perspectives and to try to answer the following questions for them:

- Who am I?
- What is my background?
- Why did I join the team?
- What do I hope to accomplish?
- How do I hope to work together?

And have others similarly talk about themselves. Also, I will be asking:

- What should we do?
- How should we do it?
- What should we stop doing?
- Who should be involved?

Introduction

Austin Public Schools is in Mower County in southeastern Minnesota, 90 minutes from the Twin Cities metropolitan area and 45 minutes west of Rochester. Austin is a vibrant and diverse community. The District is proud of its high academic standards, quality of instruction, and reputation for best practices and research-based curriculum. The area offers abundant outdoor recreational activities and arts, music, sports, dining, entertainment, festivals, and many other family-oriented events.

Community features include:

- Diverse and healthy economic sectors
- Historical sites such as the Paramount Theater and Hormel Historic Home
- Golf, camping, hiking, Jay C. Hormel Nature Center, biking and river trails, hunting, cross-country skiing
- The Hormel Institute
- Mayo Clinic Health Facility
- SPAM Museum (1 million+ visitors to date)

The following are examples of a few key questions that need to be answered before we begin thinking about a critical path forward:

- How do the Board and community measure success?
- What is the community proud of as it relates to the school?
 - How can this be leveraged into the future?
- What are emerging influences in the community, or outside of the community, that people are most excited/concerned about that need to be understood?
- How aligned is the District to realizing its Strategic Directions and Vision?
- What challenges must be addressed to realize the Strategic Directions and Vision – both short-term – and long-term?
- Do all stakeholders share in the District's path forward?

Strategic Roadmap: 2019-2022

Mission

Engage | Empower | Inspire

Core Competencies

- Teaching and learning to meet a diverse range of learners
- Willingness to act with a focus on solutions

Core Values Statement

To advance its mission and vision, the Austin Public Schools is dedicated to the following values, which represent the attitudes, behaviors, and commitments to which it must adhere.

- **High Expectations** – of and from all people all the time
- **Integrity** – to have the courage to do what is right in the face of challenge
- **Intention** – to operate with focus and purpose
- **Innovation** – to support creative culture, processes, and solutions
- **Discourse** – the ability to have constructive conversations from differing views to come to the best solutions
- **Wellness** – of our students and staff alike

Strategic Directions and Vision

- Align district structures, systems, partnerships, and resources to assure post-secondary education or workforce readiness for ALL students
- Ensure that each student has access to a high-quality curriculum and instruction for individual success
- Develop an equitable school culture for ALL students, families, and staff to represent our broader community
- Design, fund, implement and support technology and innovation as a critical asset for teaching and learning
- Provide support that leads to satisfied, engaged, and effective staff
- Manage district resources effectively and efficiently to meet student needs, demographic changes, and facility upgrades/maintenance

Austin Public Schools Highlights

- Highly diverse student body who speak more than 45 different home languages
- A highly qualified staff
- Robust advanced academics for talent development program
- Emphasis on project-based learning and STEAM curriculum
- 2019 Baldrige Performance Excellence Award — Achievement Level
- Technology through a district-wide fiber-optic network and 1:1 laptop/iPad initiative for PK through grade 12
- On-site teacher recruitment program with Winona State University's 2 + 2 program
- Partnerships with The Hormel Foundation, University of Minnesota, MacPhail Center for Music, Winona State University, and Riverland Community College
- World-class athletic complex with turf fields and seasonal dome
- Renowned music program with a new state-of-the-art facility
- Balanced and traditional calendars utilized in elementary schools to support the diverse learning community

District Enrollment

*MDE

• Banfield Elementary School.....	435
• Neveln Elementary School.....	285
• Southgate Elementary School	516
• Sumner Elementary School	245
• Woodson Kindergarten Center.....	354
• I.J. Holton Intermediate School	769
• Ellis Middle School.....	770
• Austin High School	1308
• Austin Area Learning Center.....	172
• Community Learning Center.....	65
• CLC – Pre-Kindergarten.....	115

Demographics

- Enrollment – 5034
- Hispanic or Latino – 29.2%
- American Indian or Alaska Native – .1%
- Asian – 10.5%
- Black or African American – 9.3%
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander – 1.7%
- White – 46%
- Two or more races – 3%
- Non-White students – 54%
- English Learner – 20.7%
- Primary language other than English – 37.1%
 - English – 62.9%
 - Spanish – 20.7%
 - Other – 16.4%
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) Enrollment – 303
- Special Education – 17.9%
- Free/Reduced-Price Meals – 49.2%
- Homeless – .3%
- Graduation Rate – 79.5%

Goals

The **Creating Connections: Austin 90 Day Entry Plan** is designed to address the following goals:

1. Ensure an effective, efficient, and orderly transition of leadership with Superintendent Krenz, focusing on a continued increase in achievement and engagement for all learners.
2. Learn and understand individual and collective interests, hopes, and dreams to develop a trusting, productive, collaborative relationship with the School Board.
3. Create consistent opportunities for me to listen to stakeholders and understand critical aspects of the APS, including the District culture and staff engagement.
4. Proactively ensure that student and parent 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. Identify and execute activities that must happen immediately to ensure a great beginning to the school year.
6. Sustain excitement and keep the momentum for APS's strategic directions and vision, mission, core values, and competencies while also establishing the commitment to engage in future change to ensure a system of continuous improvement.

Outcomes

Expected results of this entry plan include:

- Understanding the focus and direction of APS
- A comprehensive summary of the results and findings from my listening-learning-orientation activities
- Establishing a personal foundation of the Strategic Roadmap and potential short-term improvement plans for urgent matters

Structure

Creating Connections engages stakeholders who represent a wide range of constituents that include, but are not limited to students, parents, certified and non-certified staff, the Administrative Team, School Board members, the business community, advocacy groups, civic leaders, organizations, and governmental agencies (and most likely will expand). My entry plan also relies on a series of "pre-entry" activities, which include studying the following: School Board Policies, financials, organizational chart, achievement and engagement data, personnel trends, and other vital functions.

Finally, deep organizational learning about Austin Public Schools and valued relationship building will unquestionably fall outside the entry plan. My education will be ongoing throughout this year and beyond. I look forward to collaborating with the Board, staff, students, parents, and our community to continue to make APS an educational leader in Minnesota and beyond. For any errors or inadequacies in the following pages, of course, the responsibility is entirely my own.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Joey Page, Superintendent

Go Packers!

* This entry plan is subject to change as information is gathered and processed.

July 2021

Governance Team: School Board of Austin

Public Schools

To ensure that the District has an intense focus on meeting the needs of all learners, the Board and I must develop a trusting, positive, collaborative, team-oriented relationship. During the entry plan phase, I will work with the Board to discuss issues and matters of governance, management, core values and beliefs, structures of their relationship, and any areas of reform and our approach to the work.

Pre-Entry

Share entry plan with School Board and Administrative Team for feedback, suggestions, and guidance.

1. Engage in one-on-one meetings with Board members to deepen relationships and broaden perspectives.
2. Ask employees to provide important information about the District and their work.
3. Present **Creating Connections: Austin 90 Day Entry Plan** to the School Board to gain their input.

Entry

1. Conduct one-on-one meetings with all Board members to continue to build positive, productive relationships.

Date Completed:_____

2. Meet with all union leaders.

Date Completed:_____

3. Hold a Board retreat (*potential August*) to discuss communication protocols, roles, responsibilities, norms of behavior and interaction, expectations for the first year, and agenda-setting.

Date Completed:_____

4. Meet with the Board Chairperson and members to determine how they work in partnership with Administrative Team and me.

Date Completed:_____

5. Collaborate on the Board retreat to focus on shared values, initiate reflections on organizational structure and areas of improvement.

Date Completed:_____

6. Determine the schedule and proposed agendas for Board meetings.

Date Completed:_____

Organizational Capacity and Alignment: Administrative team

I must understand how the organization is currently operating – what is working well, and opportunities for improvement. The Administrative Team's primary role is to support the critical functions of the District. My responsibility is to operate a highly effective cross-functional team dedicated to a positive, professional culture focused on serving our students and families. The focus remains on meeting the needs of all learners.

Pre-Entry

1. Review the current District office structure to determine its alignment on student achievement and engagement to maximize operational efficiency.
2. Conduct one-on-one meetings with the Administrative Team.

Entry

1. Conduct a retreat with the administrative team to review department/building strategic plans, improvement plans, most recent achievement data (i.e., Vision ScoreCards), review current or anticipated vacancies, and learn about leadership team structures, protocols, norms, and practices.

Date Completed: _____

2. Learn how communication and decision-making occur with the Administrative team and how I might contribute. Learn meeting norms and protocols designed to focus on increased efficiency and alignment.

Date Completed: _____

3. Understand the role of the District Office and School Offices regarding supporting students and their performance and what strategies are in place for those students who are not meeting expectations.

Date Completed: _____

4. Examine specific strategies that are in place to increase access and equity in our most advanced coursework.

Date Completed: _____

5. Plan a second retreat with the Administrative Team to review accountability plans, clarify processes, and progress towards the District's Strategic Roadmap.

Date Completed: _____

6. Understand plans and preparations in place for an exceptional opening of the school year, learn protocols for assessing the effectiveness of the opening of schools (scheduling, transportation, facility preparedness, etc.).

Date Completed:_____

7. Review all signed agreements with agencies.

Date Completed:_____

8. Review and/or develop succession planning and leadership development plans.

Date Completed:_____

Student Achievement and Engagement

Every employee's responsibility is to ensure all students graduate from Austin Public Schools ready for college and/or a career. To ensure instruction occurs at high levels, certified staff must have a rigorous Birth-PreK-Adult instructional curriculum, pacing guides, unit plans, and systems designed to facilitate optimal learning and engagement opportunities. They need tools to monitor student progress and research-based interventions to deploy when the students are not successful.

Ensuring all decisions are made using the following:

- Is it good for our learners?
- Is it researched-based?
- Is it fiscally sound?
- How can we ensure fidelity?

Pre-Entry

1. Analyze student achievement and engagement data patterns and the gaps to assess the current state of teaching and learning.
2. Assess District's expectations for all students' academic success and commitment to meeting all its diverse learners' needs.

Entry

1. Review and understand the current assessment regiment and results with the Executive Director of Organizational Development & Administrative Services and Director of Information Services. Additionally, review the status of infrastructure with the Technology Coordinator that handles online learning and resource demands.

Date Completed:_____

2. Learn what processes are in place to provide the following services: Guidance Counseling, Mental Health, Psychological and Social Services, Success Coaches.

Date Completed:_____

3. Meet with the Director of Information Services to review disaggregated achievement and engagement data, instructional program alignment and current goals, and priority action areas of the District.

Date Completed:_____

4. Identify lower areas of achievement and engagement and initiate a root-cause analysis.

Date Completed:_____

5. Meet with the Executive Director of Organizational Development & Administrative Services to determine how comprehensive and research-based the current curriculum is and assess the fidelity with which the curriculum is used throughout APS.

Date Completed:_____

6. Review Teacher Development and Evaluation system.

Date Completed:_____

7. Review all other employee evaluation systems.

Date Completed:_____

8. Meet with the Executive Director of Organizational Development & Administrative Services to review curriculum and programs, especially with the student populations currently not meeting with success.

Date Completed:_____

9. Assess current professional development efforts and capacity for meeting the training needs of teachers, principals, and District staff; determine the degree to which it is job-embedded, differentiated, and student-achievement-engagement directed; do a "deep dive" to determine how much of the budget is devoted to professional development and how and evaluation of implementation.

Date Completed:_____

10. Examine graduation rate trends.

Date Completed:_____

11. Review leadership development plans.

Date Completed:_____

Engagement and Communications

APS requires a deep commitment from the entire community to be successful. I must understand the culture, history, and expectations of Austin as a whole school community. Working with staff, I will be proactive and deliberate in reaching out to all stakeholders, mainly those traditionally underrepresented in public engagement, to ensure their voices are included and valued. There will be a focus on establishing openness and transparency in all communication systems and protocols used to communicate internally and externally.

Critical questions for all stakeholders may include:

- What are the strengths of APS?
- What opportunities exist to improve APS?
- As the budget remains a challenge for so many districts across Minnesota, what are the District's priorities?
- What would you like APS to look like in five years?

Pre-Entry

1. Call key leaders and introduce myself and begin to build relationships.
2. Deploy Superintendent survey for employees in *(potentially August)* 2021.
3. Send letters to teachers, staff, and other key constituents.
4. Meet with key leaders in consultation with the School Board members.

Entry

1. Reach out to critical stakeholders and establish routine meetings, communication protocols, and reciprocal dialogues, focusing on increasing student achievement, engagement, and continuous improvement; initiate open, honest, and transparent conversations to strengthen and improve strategic partnerships.

This would include, but not be limited to:

- a. The Hormel Foundation and other philanthropic groups
- b. Elected officials
- c. Area legislators and/or representatives – state and national
- d. MDE Commissioner and Governor's point person on education
- e. Chamber of Commerce officials
- f. Welcome Center
- g. Parent organization

- h. University officials
- i. Key business leaders and partners
- j. Organized district groups and related groups (i.e., Austin Retired Teachers)
- k. Civic leaders
- l. Non-profit groups
- m. Faith-based leaders
- n. Superintendents
- o. Media

Date Completed:_____

- 2. Review succession planning and leadership development plans

Date Completed:_____

School Visits

- 2. I will consistently visit schools, meeting with principals, teachers, support staff, students, and parents about where we are as a District and where we need to meet the needs of all children.

Continuous

Student LEADERS

- 4. I will host "town hall" meetings to gather student input and initiate continuous dialogues to gain as accurate a picture as possible of student experiences. These meetings will occur through various areas in the District.

Date Completed:_____

Community Forums

- 5. I will host "town hall" meetings to gather community input and initiate continuous dialogues about student achievement, engagement, and improvement. These meetings will occur through all areas of the District. There will be proactive efforts to meet with stakeholders who have traditionally not attended such forums.

Date Completed:_____

Media Relationship

- 6. I will meet with leaders of local media outlets and reporters. These meetings will set the expectations for collaboration that is open, honest, transparent, and accurate. Media will be invited to attend community sessions and the first day of school events. I will work proactively and transparently with the media. We will tell the Austin story.

Date Completed:_____

Finance and Operations

To meet the needs of all students in the APS, Operations and Finance must maintain its excellence in resource management. Understanding the current strengths, strategies, and opportunities for improvement will be a critical focus for current state budget forecasts.

Pre-Entry

1. Review critical District financial materials, budget, most recent audit, and grants.

Entry

1. Meet Cabinet members to review current areas of responsibility, significant initiatives underway with projected timelines, and substantial or potential concerns in each area of responsibility.

Date Completed:_____

2. Review the status of employment contracts with the Executive Director of Human Resources.

Date Completed:_____

3. Review the District's financial projections, resource allocation, and budgeting processes; assess how the District's budget and budgeting process are aligned to support student achievement.

Date Completed:_____

4. Understand what is centralized and decentralized within the current organizational structure to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and support to schools.

Date Completed:_____

5. Meet with and review any current matters with District's legal counsel.

Date Completed:_____

6. Review the District's safety, inclement weather, and crisis communication plans.

Date Completed:_____

7. Understand the degree to which all District offices are cross-functional and establish key metrics and customer service goals to ensure peak efficiency and support for student achievement.

Date Completed:_____

8. Examine the APS' information system's effectiveness, especially around student achievement, budget, and human resources.

Date Completed:_____

9. Learn what type of technological tools and digital resources are available to teachers and students.

Date Completed:_____

10. Review leadership development plans.

Date Completed:_____

My First Day and First Day of School

My first official day in the office will be after a short summer vacation, the first week of July. That first week, I will be meeting with staff, School Board Members, and other key community members. The rest of the summer will be spent preparing for the school year and connecting with various stakeholders.

On the first day of school, I will be at all the schools throughout the District. This will be an important day to be with faculty, staff, volunteers, students, and families. I will meet with the administrative team to evaluate the quality of opening day/week activities, making any needed adjustments and improvements.

90-180 Days & Ongoing

Once the listening-learning-orientating period has concluded, the School Board and all stakeholders will be presented with the findings to garner further feedback and or validation. Once the focus areas have been identified, staff and I will begin creating the strategies and initiatives designed to improve identified areas to work on over the next 90 days and beyond. Finally, I will seek outside expertise and assistance in system evaluation and any improvement plans.

Working together throughout this entire process as a team, the School Board and I will ensure shared ownership of the work and results. This strategic process includes all stakeholders and ensures APS keeps a strong commitment to Engage – Empower – Inspire for great results.

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- Bloomington Public Schools
- Byron Public Schools
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- Dr. Ric Dressen, Superintendent, Edina Public Schools– *retired*, Minnesota
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- Yellow Medicine East Schools

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Very Special Thank You

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