

Hinsdale District 86 Superintendent Entry Plan

Summary

I will set three priorities for my first three months as superintendent of Hinsdale Township High School District 86, in addition to managing the day-to-day operations of the district. The first is to engage in deep **discovery in the district**, its students, schools, and people. The second is to **begin the planning work** for the subsequent school year. And the **third is to establish regular and intentional communication** structures that foster trust, engagement, and collaboration across all levels and aspects of the district.

Discovery

I want to learn in great detail how Hinsdale D86 works. To do this, I will organize my efforts via four tools—school visits, listen-and-learn sessions, meetings with community leaders, and process reviews—so that I can get up to speed about how the district and schools operate. While distinct, these tools will work together: for instance, what emerges for the process reviews might be the focus of a portion of a subsequent school visit.

Planning

Within the initial 90 days and concurrent with the discovery work, planning will begin to refresh of the district's strategic plan and set goals and strategies for the 2025-26 school year.

Communication

As I begin, I will focus on creating clear, regular communication structures with key stakeholders and the community.

Discovery

I need to learn as much as possible about how District 86 works.

School Visits

School visits are an opportunity for me to see the day-to-day work of our schools. At each school visit, I will observe classrooms, sit in on previously scheduled meetings and routines, and do some job shadowing. This will give me an opportunity to get to know staff and students, see our schools and teams in action, and understand areas of strength and opportunities in each building.

I will plan at minimum to do three school visits at each school during my first month, and set a schedule for future visits thereafter. In all my prior work, I was frequently in classrooms and schools, and will continue that practice in Hinsdale.

Listen-and-Learns

Listen-and-learns are interactive one-hour sessions with key stakeholder groups to discuss concerns, ideas, needs, and goals. For each, there will be minimal scripting in advance, and instead time for me to listen: questions will be asked, issues will be raised, and feedback will be offered.

During the first three months, I will plan to do one listen-and-learn session with parents from each school and one with staff at each school. In addition to these school-specific meetings, I will schedule specific listen-and-learn sessions with, at minimum, the following employee groups (listed alphabetically).

- Administrative Assistants
- Assistant Principals
- Athletic Directors
- Central Office Staff
- Department Chairs
- Hinsdale High School Teachers Association Leadership
- Principals
- Technology Support

Community Leader Meetings

Community Leader Meetings will help me understand the needs of District 86 outside of our schools and determine how we can best partner with our community.

An initial list of key community leaders includes the following, listed

alphabetically.

- Business Leaders
- Local Government and Elected Officials
- Parent Groups
- Realtor Groups
- Sending School District Leaders

Process Reviews

Process reviews help me see how the work happens in the district and will familiarize me with the core components of district services and procedures. These consist of roughly 3-hour meetings focused on specific topics, with accompanying plans and/or data shared. (Some might take more time.)

Most process reviews have a specific question guide, drawn from widely accepted school management frameworks and/or literature, to maximize efficiency and ensure the appropriate information is provided. In addition to understanding the status of various aspects of work, another key purpose is to understand how decisions are made and the nature and processes of the collaboration that results in those decisions.

Process review sessions include the following, listed alphabetically.

- Budget and Finance
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Professional Development
- Safety and Security
- School Facilities, Construction Plans
- School Improvement Planning
- Superintendent Onboarding
- Technology Infrastructure and Data Systems

Planning

I believe that Hinsdale D86 rests on a solid foundation, with people and outcomes that are rightfully the envy of other school districts. Yes, tremendous opportunities exist—around governance and decision-making, around the distribution of opportunities, around student outcomes. We need to dig deeply and reflect on who we want to be as a district and determine together needs to be done to get there.

With a new superintendent the time is right to refresh the strategic plan and

determine what necessary advances can be put in place before the 2025-26 school year. It is essential we all reach agreement about what the next level of work is all about.

To conduct an inclusive process, planning retreats will need to happen in partnership with stakeholders to determine a map for the future.

The principles behind my strategic plan framework and timeline include:

- We must build on what currently exists, rather than reinvent.
- Major stakeholders must be welcomed to the table on day one.
- Feedback loops are needed between planning retreats, allowing the community the opportunity to provide feedback as we build the strategic plan.
- Continuous improvement should be a focus for everyone, acknowledging both where we are now and prioritizing a vision of where we want to be the short, medium, and long term.

A successful process will result in the update and/or creation of the following documents, which will be the foundation our organization's growth, and will build community throughout the district:

- A current-state report that highlights our context, our assets and strengths, and the root causes of our challenges.
- A vision statement that expresses the hopes of where we want to be in 5-10 years.
- A mission statement that defines why we exist as an organization.
- Values that define how we will conduct ourselves and expectations for how we work at all levels of the organization, from the classroom to the boardroom.
- Measurable and achievable goals that all staff can work to achieve.
- A short list of key strategies that describe how we will make progress toward our goals.
- A dashboard containing leading metrics that will enable us to monitor and manage the enactment and implementation of our strategies and can be reported to the board and the broader community on a regular basis.

Timeline

Most planning will occur in fall 2024, with a timeline adjusted so that decisions can be made in advance of the budgeting and staffing decisions for the 2025-26

school year.

September: Data Retreat #1

The Data Retreat allows the strategic planning team to answer the question, “Where are we now?” as identified through 2023 data from the Illinois Report Card and the existing strategic plan.

October: Data Retreat #2

Our data retreat will continue, reviewing the preliminary 2024 Illinois Report data and exploring trends in performance over time.

November: Vision Retreat

The Vision Retreat allows the strategic planning team to answer the question, “Where do we want to be?” and paint a clear picture of what our hopes are for the future.

December: Setting Direction Retreat

The Setting Direction Retreat allows the strategic planning team to review the outcomes of the previous retreats, and then set specific strategies that get us from where we are to where we want to be.

January: Finalize, Board Adoption

After final feedback is reviewed on the entire plan by the team, the plan is presented to the school board for adoption.

February: Establish Monitoring

Wrap-up planning committee work; decide together on a mechanism for monitoring the workstreams identified.

Feedback

After each retreat all community stakeholders are given an opportunity to provide formal feedback on progress, which is shared with the planning team and used to edit the plan at the next retreat.

Planning Team Members

I will convene a planning team of 25-35 individuals, selected to balance representation and perspectives across various roles.

Administrators
Board Members
Community Leaders
Non-Certified Staff
Parents
Students
Teachers
Union Leadership

Communication

Consistent, timely communication is essential. This allows a school district to function effectively and provide the leadership team with the information they need to make decisions.

The following initial communication plan will be followed with fidelity through the first academic year, after which the leadership team can then reflect on its effectiveness and suggest improvements.

Weekly Email Update to All Staff

A weekly email to all staff members will contain upcoming calendar items, district successes, new areas requiring attention, information requests, and reporting on large projects. Key items from the weekly board update will be included as well.

Monthly Video Update to All Staff and Community

A monthly video clip will be posted to the district website that includes progress on district plans, strategic indicators, district priorities, and process improvements. The video is intended to be an update for not only internal staff, but also external stakeholders.

Bi-Annually All-staff Town Hall

Every six months I will hold meetings with all employee groups to allow for two-way communication between the superintendent, senior leaders, and staff members. These town halls will begin with a short message by the superintendent and will be followed by an open question and answer format so staff can interact with the leadership team.