FOREST LAKE AREA SCHOOLS







SUPERINTENDENT ENTRY PLAN

John-Paul (JP) Jacobson, Superintendent

"First seek to understand, then to be understood."
Steven Covey

→ INTRODUCTION

A new lens on a familiar community



I am deeply honored to serve as the next Superintendent of Forest Lake Area Schools. Having served our community as both a building-level principal and Director of Teaching & Learning, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible dedication of our educators and the limitless potential of our students. The opportunity to partner with our families, staff, and community to fulfill our district's mission—to prepare and empower every student to thrive in and contribute to an ever-changing world—is a privilege I hold in the highest regard. I look forward to the collaborative work ahead, ensuring that every community within ISD 831 views our vibrant and effective school system as a collective point of pride.

This plan lays out my commitment to "re-learn" our district through a new lens as I transition into the Superintendent leadership position. While I bring valuable historical knowledge, I am entering this role with a listening ear to ensure every voice is heard as we work to prepare and empower every student to thrive. This entry plan is not meant to be inflexible. Instead, it serves as a blueprint for how I intend to connect with people, build relationships, learn about the district, and ensure that essential leadership responsibilities are handled. I am looking forward to the many conversations I will have throughout this next year.

Most Sincerely,
John-Paul (JP) Jacobson - Superintendent, Forest Lake Area Schools (ISD 831)

→ CORE BELIEFS AND LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

The Compass

Before I describe the steps in this entry plan, I believe it is important to share my vision for education and the core values that drive my leadership. These have been developed through my years as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and district leader. They will guide my entry plan activities and how I intend to contribute to the talented team at Forest Lake Area Schools.

Vision

Every student deserves a school system that honors their individual uniqueness and is highly responsive to their needs. Our work should be to partner with parents, students, and the community to ensure that every student graduates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to live a successful and healthy life.

Stewardship

I embrace the belief that school districts should be responsible and strategic in how they manage time, financial, and human resources, aligning them with mutually developed priorities. Programs and strategies proven to deliver results and help us fulfill the promises of our strategic plan should always take priority.

Instruction

The most important work in our district happens in our classrooms. Our efforts should be centered around developing a culture built upon high-quality relationships with students, equity in all aspects, student-centered learning, and instructional best practices. Our leadership must provide the necessary support to help our staff in doing this work.

Team

An effective team is one built upon trust, quality professional relationships, and strong leadership. When these conditions are met, the group can make sound decisions based on multiple perspectives, all aligned with the common goal of doing good for kids. In this way, the sum of our collective efforts yields better results than our individual work could ever achieve.

Continuous Improvement

Data-driven conversations lead to reflection and realization of what is working and what needs improvement. Having a culture in which we are clear on our goals, constantly measure our progress toward realizing those goals, and look for new ways to innovate and better serve our youth and our broader community is the charge we have in education.



→ PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Goals

The focus of this entry plan is to continue learning as much as possible about our schools, their people, and the community to help me understand the district in depth. Understanding the history, our strengths, and our areas for growth is critical to my ability to lead the district. By listening and learning, I help our team develop common goals, build strong professional relationships, and align our resources with our priorities.

01

To meet, get to know, and begin to build connections with the people working in our schools and who make up our strong community.

02

To learn about the strengths, challenges, and areas needing attention within the school district.



03

To gain a better understanding of the school district's and the community's history, as well as what its people see as their dreams for our future.

04

To fully understand the district's programs, initiatives, and priorities being implemented in our schools.

05

To learn more about our community's values, norms, and expectations.



→ PHASE I

Listening and Re-Learning

JULY-SEPTEMBER

Focus: Build and grow relationships and gain a comprehensive understanding of the district's strengths, challenges, and community expectations.

MEET WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS	I will conduct one-on-one meetings with school board members, building principals, students, teachers, administrative staff, key community members, and union leadership to understand their unique pressures and priorities.
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY VISITS	I will visit each school and district facility to meet with staff and students, observe the work happening in classrooms, and gain a better assessment of our facilities. I will attend community events and local meetings to engage with the broader community.
VISIBILITY AND PRESENCE	I will conduct regular school visits and "office hours" in buildings during student hours to remain visible and accessible. I will provide a frequent presence at student athletic and arts activities.



→ PHASE I

Listening and Re-Learning

JULY-SEPTEMBER

Focus: Build and grow relationships and gain a comprehensive understanding of the district's strengths, challenges, and community expectations.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- What should I know about Forest Lake Area Schools and the communities it serves?
- What are the strengths of Forest Lake Area Schools that should be maintained?
- What are the challenges facing the district?
- What are some opportunities that we need to explore in order to better serve our students?
- Is there anything else I should know as I work to effectively lead as superintendent?

SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Completion of 1-1 meetings with all Board members, district administrators and union leadership.
- Creation of a "State of the District" summary report based on feedback from initial listening sessions



→ PHASE II

Goal Setting & Planning

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Focus: Establish short-term goals based on insights gained during the Listening & Learning phase, with a focus on relationship-building, communication, and early-impact initiatives.

SET SUPERINTENDENT'S PRIORITIES

Develop a set of 3-5 short-term goals that align with community needs and district priorities. Share these goals with the school board and key stakeholders for feedback.

FORM A SUPERINTENDENT'S STUDENT COUNCIL

Select a diverse group of student leaders from middle and high school to provide insights and represent student voices in district planning and decision-making.
Use this team to gather ongoing feedback on their school experience and how Forest Lake Area Schools can continue to meet their needs as developing teenagers.

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Create a communication plan that includes regular updates to staff, families, and the community. Implement a two-way engagement strategy, ensuring feedback is collected through various methods, including regular community engagement activities.

DRAFT AN ACTION PLAN FOR YEAR ONE

Outline the superintendent's goals and priorities for the year and draft an action plan aligned with these goals and priorities. Share this action plan with stakeholders and the school board for input and refinement, ensuring alignment with the community's needs and expectations.

SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Development of 3-5 short-term strategic priorities.
- Successful establishment and first meeting of the Superintendent's Student Council.
- Deployment of a comprehensive, two-way district communication plan.

→ PHASE III

Action & Engagement

JANUARY-JUNE

Focus: Implement key actions based on the set goals, enhance two-way communication, and solidify a strong collaborative leadership presence in the community.

LAUNCH HIGH-IMPACT INITIATIVES	Initiate high-priority projects based on identified goals and priorities that advance student learning and enhance their school experience. Publicly share progress on these initiatives to showcase transparency and accountability.
ENHANCE PUBLIC RELATIONS & MEDIA ENGAGEMENT	Develop a proactive media engagement plan to highlight district achievements and priorities. Use social media and other modalities strategically to share positive stories and provide real-time updates.
STRENGTHEN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION	Establish regular superintendent updates via building visits and newsletters to keep staff informed and engaged. Create opportunities for direct interaction, such as "office hours" or informal coffee chats with staff.
CONDUCT MID-YEAR AND END-OF-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT	Review the progress on the established goals with the school board. Adjust the year-one action plan based on feedback and changing circumstances. Share a summary of findings and next steps with the community to maintain transparency and build continued support.

SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Presentation of a measurable mid-year progress report to the School Board.
- Evidence of active community participation in engagement activities and feedback channels.