CHAMPIONING THE SUCCESS OF ALL STUDENTS

SUPERINTENDENT TRANSITION PLAN

Olwen E. Herron, Ed.D.

Leading into Tomorrow

WILLIAMSBURG-JAMES CITY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INTRODUCTION

I am deeply honored to serve as the new superintendent of Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools. Because of my leadership role in WJCC for over four years, I have the advantage of beginning my tenure as superintendent of schools with established working relationships, deep understanding of the division’s strengths and challenges, and total commitment to the school division and the community.

I have developed this Superintendent Transition Plan as a framework to guide my areas of emphasis and the specific actions I intend to take over the next 120 days. The transition priorities I have identified are designed to enable me to see the division through a new lens. As I listen and learn from a broad representation of community members and staff, I know I will gain valuable information about the needs of the division and the desires of the community that will assist me in planning for the future of WJCC.

My priorities as the superintendent include establishing a strong presence in our schools and the community, reaching out to our diverse groups of citizens and employees to gather input, building upon the excellent instructional program already in existence, and sustaining the civil, inclusive, collaborative culture created during my role as the acting superintendent.

As superintendent, I will sustain the division’s forward momentum, increase transparency, and bring a singular focus to meeting the diverse needs of students. Through this transition plan, I will leverage the momentum of change that new leadership brings to fulfill the School Board’s vision of “championing the success of all students.”

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PHASE ONE—TRANSITION PROCESS

**LISTEN** — Engage in meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders (including students, parents/families, community members, business and civic leaders, and WJCC teachers, administrators and other employees) to understand the strengths and challenges identified during the superintendent search process.

**LEARN** — Compile and review reports from listening to staff and the community. Analyze performance data and other information that will provide insights into the aspirations of the School Board and community for students and the future of WJCC.

**BUILD** — Reinforce strong working relationships already in place with the School Board, WJCC employees, community members, and state and local leaders.

**PLAN** — Identify areas of priority and the development process for the new strategic plan.

These activities are intended to yield two key outcomes at the end of the transition period: (1) a comprehensive summary of findings, observations, and information garnered from listening and learning; and (2) an outline of the process I will use to work in partnership with the School Board to authorize the next WJCC Strategic Plan.

TRANSITION GOALS

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND EQUITY** — Focus on teaching and learning and put the needs of students first in every decision.

**GOVERNANCE** — Foster a trusting, productive, collaborative working relationship with the School Board.

**COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT** — Build public trust and confidence using multiple opportunities and methods to communicate with all constituents.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE** — Establish a respectful, positive school division culture centered on teaching and learning.

**ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS** — Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency to ensure strong support for schools.
Focus on teaching and learning and put the needs of students first in every decision

Excellent instruction is possible when teachers have a rigorous and aligned curriculum, the processes, and tools to monitor student progress, and the resources to provide essential interventions.

I will continue my strong focus on student achievement and closing the performance gaps among student sub-populations. I will continue to analyze patterns in student data to evaluate the current state of teaching and learning; assess professional learning opportunities to determine if they are differentiated and student-achievement focused; and promote innovative methods that will fully engage students in learning to ensure their career and college readiness.

**Transition Actions**

~ Present instructional programs/initiatives and achievement data through the *Equity through Engagement* series to inform the School Board and community about the strategies already in place for meeting the needs of all students.
~ Begin an analysis of the effectiveness of all current instructional programs.
~ Develop a plan for implementing a balanced assessment program for evaluating student progress.
Foster a trusting, productive, collaborative relationship with the WJCC School Board

A strong relationship between the Board and superintendent is essential to ensure division progress and a unified focus on meeting the needs of all students.

I will continue to nurture the collaborative and positive working relations I have established with each School Board member and the School Board as a whole.

Transition Actions

~ Share this transition plan with the School Board for feedback, suggestions, and guidance.
~ Engage in scheduled one-on-one meetings with each School Board member.
~ Organize a School Board retreat to support open discussions on communication protocols, roles and responsibilities, processes for addressing constituent concerns, agenda setting protocols, criteria for the superintendent evaluation, and expectations for the superintendent’s first year of service.

Build public trust and confidence using multiple opportunities and methods to communicate with all constituents

To be most effective, the school division must be involved in the basic fabric of its community life, reflecting a wide range of viewpoints and cultures. Family and community engagement is essential to this process.

I will continue to nurture the positive working relationships I have established with the County and City Managers; collaborate with WJCEA; serve on the WJCC Education Foundation Board; and meet regularly with the WJCC Parent Teacher Organization.

Transition Actions

~ Meet with the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, economic development agencies, and higher education leadership about current perceptions of the school division’s role in economic development.
~ Arrange open forums for all interested community members to give their input.
~ Schedule meetings with civic and faith-based leaders and non-profit agency directors.
~ Meet with parents to gain a clearer picture of their priorities/areas for service improvement in WJCC.
~ Meet individually with key media representatives to improve transparency and establish/reinforce communications.
Establish a respectful, positive school division culture centered on teaching and learning

Teaching and learning can only be successful if each employee’s vital role in fulfilling the school division’s vision and mission is valued.

I will continue to promote an organizational norm for open, effective, and consistent communication throughout the school division to nurture positive, collaborative relationships with central office leaders and all principals.

I will continue visiting schools and attending school and department functions regularly to maintain my visibility within the organization and build relationships with teachers and staff members.

**Transition Actions**

~ Create focus groups to engage central office departments, principals, teacher organizations, groups of parents, students, and staff in dialogue to gain a broad perspective for the future direction of WJCC.
~ Assess the quality, quantity, and effectiveness of all existing forms of internal and external communication.
~ Review existing exit survey responses and climate survey data to identify departments or schools with low morale and/or negative culture and work with staff to develop an action plan to address findings.

Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency to ensure strong support for schools

A high-performing, results-oriented executive team dedicated to a positive, professional culture is imperative to the future success of WJCC. Central office staff must provide outstanding service to schools and commit to continuous improvement.

I will continue to meet regularly with executive staff and principals, keep informed about key issues in the departments of Finance, Human Resources, and Operations, read critical documents, and review pertinent data.

**Transition Actions**

~ Identify/hire new leaders to join the executive team.
~ Review the current central office structure to maximize operational efficiency and place additional emphasis on student achievement.
~ Conduct one-on-one interviews with all direct reports and department heads.
~ Conduct a leadership survey or focus group for principals to ascertain their support needs.
~ Conduct an executive team retreat to build trust; determine communication and decision-making protocols; review standards of practice; and set clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and systems for mutual accountability.
CONCLUSION

This document highlights Phase One of my three-part approach to ensure a seamless transition from my role as acting superintendent to superintendent of WJCC schools. This phase has been purposely structured to allow me to gather feedback and ideas that can be used to build upon the school division’s distinguished record of student success.

The knowledge gained from Phase One’s in-depth conversations with the community, staff, and the School Board will help shape future priorities, goals, and strategies.

In Phase Two, I will collaborate with the School Board to create the process and timeline for the development of the 2017-2022 WJCC Strategic Plan, as well as the structures to measure and report on the plan’s implementation.

In Phase Three which will begin in September 2017, I will lead the implementation of the new 2017-2022 WJCC Strategic Plan, a blueprint for “leadership into tomorrow.”

It is my intention to be a catalyst for the positive changes which ultimately will impact teaching and learning and create a broad coalition of support for Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools.

Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.

- John F. Kennedy