

Date: October 28, 2010
To: The SJUSD School Board
From: Vincent Matthews, Ed.D.
Re: Superintendent 90-Day Report Out

Inspiring and Preparing for Success: The First Ninety Days

Introduction

The San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) articulates its vision as a learning community that inspires students to be the best they can be, equipping them with world-class skills, a commitment to lifelong learning, active citizenship in a diverse society, and respect for self and others. The stated goals are:

1. Every student will meet or exceed state and district academic and lifelong learning standards
2. SJUSD’s divisions and schools will demonstrate cost effective budget management
3. SJUSD will recruit, support, and retain a high quality workforce
4. SJUSD will ensure staff, parent, student and community satisfaction and effective partnerships
5. SJUSD’s division, departments and schools will demonstrate effective, efficient and exemplary operational practices
6. SJUSD’s employees will demonstrate innovative educational leadership

How close is the district to realizing these goals? What are the challenges that must be addressed to actualize the vision? Do all stakeholders share this desire? As your new superintendent, I must address these and many other questions to ensure that SJUSD continues to provide all students with the opportunity to excel.

This plan of entry was designed to ensure that I engaged in a thoughtful, proactive, strategic beginning to lead SJUSD. The transition activities outlined in this plan reflected my strong desire to make a thoughtful and deliberate entry into this very solid school district, and to take the necessary time to listen and learn about the San Jose Unified School District. As high quality instruction and successful student learning are the keys to achieving our collective educational mission, this entry plan was organized to provide me with a great deal of information, input, and ultimately insight into how best to strengthen and build upon the current and historical academic success of the schools in the San Jose Unified School District.



Goals

This entry plan sought to accomplish the following goals:

1. To ensure a smooth and orderly transition of leadership and to carefully structure this transition to best support and facilitate clear understanding of the districts’ current state of instructional improvement and increases in student achievement
2. To develop a clear, trusting, productive, collaborative relationship with the SJUSD Board of Trustees
3. To create opportunities for the new superintendent to listen broadly and deeply to a multitude of stakeholders and gain a comprehensive understanding of SJUSD
4. To proactively ensure that all 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. To build enthusiasm for SJUSD’s vision, mission, and strategic plan, while also establishing the commitment to engage in needed change to ensure a system of continuous improvement
6. To identify and execute activities that must happen immediately to ensure an outstanding beginning to the school year

Outcomes/ Deliverables

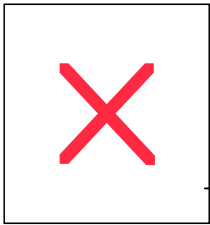
Expected results

- Superintendent visitation to every school in the district
- A 90 day report on observations, findings and a proposed vision for the future

Preamble

On April 4, 2007, a San Jose Mercury News headline screamed: “ H-1B demand exceeds limit.” The article noted that, on the very first day that companies were eligible to apply for H-1B visas for high-tech workers, a record 150,000 applications had been filed for the only 65,000 visas available for all of 2008. Anxiety was rampant among technology companies, which would have to participate in a lottery to determine who would receive these visas designated for engineers, computer programmers, and other technically skilled workers.

Meanwhile, all around Silicon Valley, poorly educated California children are dropping out of school in increasing numbers – recent statistics show the on-time graduation rate having declined to about 67% in 2006- and the state’s prisons are bursting at the seams, filled largely with dropouts and



functionally illiterate young people who are the victims of the state’s declining investments in education.

This is one example of why this district reaching our top goal of EVERY student meeting or exceeding district and state academic standards is critical.

Achievement data shows that all ethnic subgroups have risen over time however the gap between groups that have been achieving at lower levels and groups achieving at higher levels has not been significantly narrowed. In order for us to be a great district we need EVERY student achieving at high levels. This district has been a good district for decades. Jim Collins in Good to Great points out that “Good is the enemy of Great.” Being good can assist institutions and organizations from a sense of urgency regarding achieving its mission.

What follows are my initial impressions, observations and immediate recommendations after my initial 90 day listening and learning campaign.

The 90 Day Listening and Learning Report –

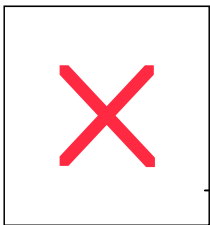
Structure of Entry Plan

The superintendent engaged in a purposeful effort to listen, learn, discern and begin to develop plans for the future, in collaboration with the Board and the San Jose community. The following activities were the core components of the entry plan:

1. Developed working relationship with the Board of Education
2. Assessed the organizational capacity and alignment: District Executive and Senior Staff
3. Analyzed Data and Reviewed Documents
4. Engaging Parents and Community Leaders
5. Sought understanding of the current, strengths, strategies, and opportunities for improvement in light of current budget challenges
6. 90 Day Plan Report Out

The following person’s from the SJUSD community were interviewed to gather information:

All SJUSD Board members
Superintendent’s Council Members
District Directors
District Managers
Principals in 1 on 1 meetings
CSEA President
SJTA President
SJAA President
Trades Union
AFSCME Union
County Superintendent



County Board Members
Surrounding District Superintendent’s
City Council members
Civic Leaders
Charter School Leaders
Parent Leaders
Key elected officials
Area legislators – state and national
Chamber of Commerce officials
Parent organizations and local PTAs
Key business and Civic leaders and advocates
Non-profit groups
Faith-based leaders
Faculty and staff
Former superintendents
Teachers, Parents and Community members at Community meetings

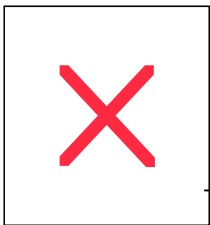
These are impressions, observations and recommendations that I have made throughout my listening and learning campaign through the first 90 days:

I. Governance Team: SJUSD Board of Trustees

In order to ensure that the district has an intense focus on meeting the needs of all children, the board and superintendent must develop a trusting, positive, collaborative, team-oriented relationship.

Activities:

- Entry Plan Shared
- One-on-one meetings with Board members held
- Board members interviewed
- Held first Board retreat
- Met with the Board president to determine how they work in partnership with the superintendent and senior staff
- Determined the schedule and proposed agendas for quarterly meetings with the Board
- Collaborated on the next Board retreat to focus on shared values, initiate reflections on organizational structure, areas of improvement, and implementation of a systemic accountability system.
- Established regular meeting times with the Board president for reviewing and constructing agendas



Initial Impressions and Observations

- The SJUSD Board is focused and places the well being of students as a first priority.
- The SJUSD Board works well as a unit.
- The community perspective is that board is committed to student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps.
- The adoption of Board Policy 0210 is evidence of the board’s commitment to providing a first class education for EVERY child.

Recommendations:

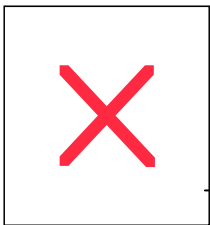
- Continue Semi-Annual Governance team meetings to ensure that the organization is continuing to move in the direction that is board driven
- Board should consider establishing exactly what types of data they will review periodically throughout the year and annually (ex. How many students from each school make a years growth? Which sub groups are making a year’s growth? Etc.)

II Organizational Capacity and Alignment

To implement and execute the district’s strategic plan at maximum efficiency, it will be critical to support and hold accountable a high-performing, results-oriented district executive team. To make sure we operate as a highly effective cross-functional team, dedicated to a positive, professional culture, we must, as *Good to Great* author Jim Collins states, “Ensure we have the right people on the bus and in the right seats.”

Activities

- Reviewed the current central office structure to determine focus on student achievement and maximizing operational efficiency
- Conducted one-one-one interviews and review resumes and briefing papers with all direct reports
- Conducted a retreat with senior staff to review district’s strategic plan, improvement plan, most recent achievement data, review current or anticipated vacancies in central office or principalships, and discuss leadership team structures and practice
- Determined how communication and decision-making will occur with executive team, establishing meeting protocols and systems designed to focus on increased student achievement and continuous improvement
- Conducted one-on-one interviews with all unit heads in central services, focusing on alignment and execution of key strategies
- Interviewed the structure of the communications department
- Initiate plans to establish key metrics and customer service goals for each functional unit to ensure the performance of central office can be determined and measured with alignment to core function and support for student achievement



- Met with C and I Assistant Supt. to assess current data and performance of all schools under his supervision and determine quality of actions designed for continuous improvement
- Explored the current state of strategic data monitoring in SJUSD to ensure all students are performing at or above grade level and/or are receiving appropriate, targeted interventions
- Ensured all necessary plans and preparations are in place for an outstanding opening of school; establish protocols for assessing effectiveness of the opening of schools

Initial Impressions and Observations:

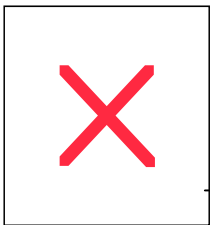
- Since research and best practices stress that achievement gaps are closed through effective instruction it is important to acknowledge that the re-alignment of the division of Curriculum and Instruction has the division and sites focused on accelerating achievement for every child through the lens of powerful instruction.
- The capacity in the finance department and operations department are definite strengths of the district.
- Although the strategic plan was most recently updated in May 2010, there is a list of activities in the plan that staff is not engaged in and activities we are engaged in that are not in the plan.
- An updated plan could more closely align to identified needs that will continue to improve instructional expertise and eliminate gaps in performance between Latino and White students
- There does not appear to be effective alignment or communication between the division of External Programs and the division of Curriculum and Instruction
- There is a lack of clarity regarding the alignment of the offices organized under the Assistant Superintendent of External programs.
- The division of External Programs does not appear to be aligned and staffed in a comparable way to districts of similar size and make-up.

Recommendations:

- Continue the district’s focus on increasing rigor and instructional effectiveness in the classrooms. The district’s resources should continue to be allocated to support this initiative
- The Strategic Plan should be reviewed and modified as appropriate
- An audit of the division of External Programs should be conducted
 - Audit of office Continuous Improvement
 - Audit of the Research and Assessment department

The aim of the audit should seek to answer the following questions:

- Are External Programs and Curriculum and Instruction organized in a way that there is effective communication between them?



- Are the offices under the Assistant Supt. of External programs organized effectively?
 - How is the Division of External Programs aligned and staffed compared to similar districts
- If we are truly to work to reduce the achievement gap, over the next 6 – 12 months staff must address how we will continue to support instructional rigor and site leadership by addressing the following questions:
 - How are our leaders developed?
 - How are our leaders held accountable?
 - How are leaders supported when they fall short?
 - What data are we using year over year to assist us in knowing whether we are succeeding in our goal of every child meeting or exceeding district and state standards?

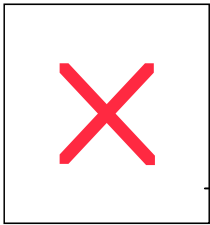
III. Data Analysis and Document Review

Activities:

- The Superintendent and staff conducted analysis and examined a wide variety of data sources, particularly student achievement data, to discern trends, patterns, areas of accomplishments and areas for additional focus. Student outcomes on standardized tests, value added data, graduation rates, AP course taking and passing rates and other relevant indicators were disaggregated by program, race and geography and carefully studied.
- In addition, resource and administrative indicators were closely reviewed. The current budget development process will be assessed, as will the performance of central offices in meeting their key metrics and customer service goals. Departmental organization charts, job descriptions, resumes of current key personnel, and the current compensation matrix will also be thoroughly examined.
- Written reports and presentations on SJUSD resources use, personnel, organization, leadership and/or academic outcomes will be read and considered.
- Board Policies and Administrative Regulations will be reviewed.

Initial Impressions and Observations:

- The district adopted an Equity Policy that helps establish a subset of expected data that the community can expect to see.
- The Equity Policy targets professional growth, parent involvement, evaluation accountability, and fiscal alignment. Fiscal stability and employment practices
- The district has a deep and rich source in our data warehouse.



- Principals and site staffs have come to expect a certain data set at the beginning of each year
- The data that we have used in community reports have painted an average picture which tends to mask where there is uneven performance
- Data currently indicates that there is an opportunity gap between the education that we are providing to our white and Asian students and our Latino and Black students.
- It is not consistent from site to site how data is used to inform instruction or change practice at sites

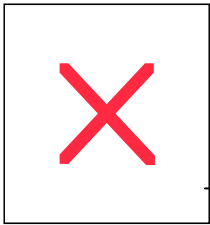
Recommendations:

- The district/Board need to establish a very clear picture of what data the community can always expect to see from the district every year.
- Equity focused professional development implemented at Board, district leadership and site level
- Recommended Audit of the research and assessment department to answer the following questions:
 - Are there effective processes for setting and communicating benchmarks?
 - What is the quality of instructional assessment in the district?
 - Are interim assessments used to provide feedback on a regular basis to inform instruction?
 - How is assessment data disseminated and used at the student, classroom, school and district levels?
 - Are effective assessment tools, processes, data systems, accountability mechanisms and training levels?
 - Are we using the results of our benchmarks effectively?
 - Is there open communication and support to building principals regarding all operations in the External Programs?
 - Is leadership being systematically developed in all departments in Instructional Services and External Programs?

IV. Community Engagements and District Communications

Activities:

- During this time of initial entry, there was a focus on engaging and mobilizing parents and community leaders in the pursuit of making SJUSD a world-class school district. The new superintendent reached out to partners traditionally underrepresented in public education to make certain their voices are also heard and valued.



- Five Communitywide meetings were held and the Key questions asked included
 - i. What are the strengths of SJUSD?
 - ii. What are areas of needed improvement for SJUSD?
 - iii. What are the priorities of the district?

School Visits

- The superintendent conducted visits to every school in SJUSD to engage the principal, teachers, support staff, and parent volunteers about where we are as a district and where we need to be to meet the needs of all children.

Community Forums

- The superintendent, Trustees, and senior staff held multiple “town hall” meetings using a Strengths-Weaknesses analysis model to gather community input and initiate continuous dialogues about student achievement and improvement. These meetings occurred throughout the 5 areas of the school district. There was a proactive effort to meet with as many stakeholders as possible.

Initial Impressions and Observations-

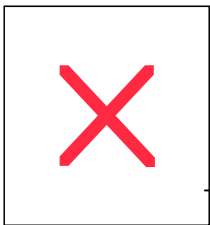
- The repeated strengths from the community meetings:
 - The district has consistently shown fiscal responsibility
 - The district offers a rich variety of programs for students (I.B., Magnet, Immersion, etc.)
 - The district offers and supports a variety of parent outreach programs
- The repeated areas for growth:
 - The district struggles to meet the needs of both high performing and low performing students
 - The district does not do enough to remove poor performing teachers
 - The district does not have enough incentives for teachers and needs to do a better job of recruiting teachers that reflect the diversity of our student population
 - The district needs to do a better job of communication with parents and a better job of including parents in the decision making process

Recommendation

- Investigate the effectiveness of the district’s customer service training

Media Strategy

- The superintendent will meet with leaders of local media outlets, editorial boards, and education reporters, including ethnic and business press. These meetings will set expectations for collaboration that is open, honest, transparent, and accurate.



TV, radio, and newspaper reporters will be invited to appropriate community sessions and first day of school events. These meetings will be important to engage the media in current education issues and system improvement efforts.

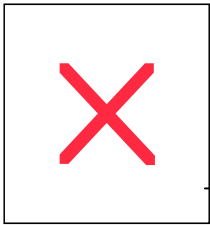
- Recommend audit of communications
 - There should be increased training for the public information officer
 - The district communications leadership should be tasked with the creation of a communication plan

V. Operation and Finance

In order to meet the needs of all students in SJUSD, it is critical that Operations and Finance are effective. Understanding the current strengths, strategies, and opportunities for improvement in light of current budget challenges was a critical focus of the new superintendent. Each division was appraised to determine how they maximize support and services to schools using the continuous improvement model.

Activities

- Reviewed key district financial materials, budget, most recent audit, and grants
- Conducted one-on-one meetings with direct reports on budget, operations, and human resources
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with all office heads, ensuring each division has fidelity to its core function and has a student-focused agenda
- Reviewed district’s financial projections, resource allocation and budgeting processes; assess how district’s budget and budgeting process is aligned to support student achievement
- Conducted one-on-one meetings with lawyers to review any current legal proceedings or outstanding judgments against the district and to provide a briefing on state education code with particular attention to statutes currently impacting or likely to impact the district
- Reviewed employee group contracts and negotiation plans; find out what the role of the superintendent has been in negotiations
- Received update on plans to further apply for federal funds
- Reviewed district’s safety and crisis communication plan
- Conducted a review of the district’s public information office and programs; review the history, services, and outreach to entire community
- Assessed the degree to which all offices are cross-functional and begin to establish key metrics and customer service goals to ensure peak efficiency and support for student achievement
- Examined the effectiveness of SJUSD’s information-data management system, especially around student achievement, budget, and human resources
- Ensured all necessary plans and preparations are in place for an outstanding opening of school



Initial Impressions and Observations

- Fiscal Department is a district strength
- The district has made fiscally sound decisions
- The district has built up its reserve in preparation for difficult fiscal conditions
- Employee units have made decisions to support district’s fiscal constraints
- The district is currently using reserves to balance budget

Recommendations

- Continue to use and present financial data in a transparent manner so that the district in making fiscally responsible decisions
- Develop plan for increasing revenues at local level
- Implementing transparent budget process so that when cuts have to be made they align to the district’s strategic goals