



Los Banos Unified School District

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Date: January 11, 2018
To: Los Banos Unified School District-Board of Education
From: Mark E. Marshall, Ed.D.
Re: Superintendent Entry Plan Report

Introduction

For the past six months, I have been implementing a Superintendent Entry Plan for the Los Banos Unified School District (LBUSD). A positive Superintendent Entry Plan is critical to the success for the new Superintendent and requires extensive short and long range planning. Its primary purpose is to provide a framework and the structure that will guide the Superintendent's entry to the Los Banos Unified School District (LBUSD). Many of the transition activities outlined in the plan reflected my desire to make a deliberate and thoughtful entry, inclusive of taking the necessary time to listen and learn about LBUSD. I have created a report that details my findings from May 11 to December 15. This document is a culmination of my: conversations, data analysis, observations, and survey results.

Goals

My entry plan sought to accomplish the following goals:

1. Ensure a seamless transition of leadership with Dean Bubar (LBUSD Interim Superintendent)
2. Provide a structure to listen and learn about the Los Banos Unified School District
3. Ensure that multiple stakeholder perspectives and voices are heard
4. Create the framework for a vision of the future and a strategic planning process
5. Establish a clear working relationship with the Los Banos Unified School District Board of Education
6. Create an instructional improvement process that results in increases in student achievement
7. Review the organizational structure, climate, budget, and key work processes to ensure proper alignment of resources, efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of all students.

Outcomes/ Deliverables

Expected results:

- The Superintendent will begin to facilitate an energized school district community excited about the focus and new direction for the organization. (In Progress)
- The Superintendent will develop a visitation to all of the district schools. (Completed)
- The Superintendent will present a First Semester Report on observations, findings, and recommendations for the future.

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Paula Mastrangelo, *Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education*

Preface Statement

The Los Banos Unified School District (LBUSD) is a public school system in Merced County that operates fourteen school buildings from half-day kindergarten through grade 12. District enrollment is approximately 11,000 students. While LBUSD has historically performed slightly below County and State Averages, the district's most recent State assessment results indicated increases that exceeded both County and State results. LBUSD receives funding from the state, local property taxes, federal and miscellaneous grant monies. The district's budget is in excess of \$120,000,000. While LBUSD facilities are generally in good repair (as indicated by our most recent Williams Visit), many of our schools are overcrowded and we are desperately in need of at least one elementary school and a mechanism to balance the enrollment at the secondary level. The Los Banos community is very supportive of its public schools. Stakeholders demonstrate this by actively supporting their children, classroom teachers and school activities. Partnerships exist between the district and local businesses.

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

Structure of Entry Plan

I engaged in a deliberate effort to discern, evaluate, listen, learn, and begin to develop plans for the future, in collaboration with the Board of Education and the Los Banos community. The following activities were the core components of the entry plan:

- Comprehensive data analysis and document perusal
- Communication with the news media for reporting to the public
- Cultivating of a positive working relationship with the Los Banos Unified School District Board of Education
- Meetings, interviews, community forums, and school visits
- Utilization of outside expertise to analyze gaps in our performance.

The following stakeholders from the LBUSD community were interviewed to gather information:

- Board of Education
- Central Office Staff
- Collective bargaining groups
- Community members/organizations
- Higher education officials
- Local Charities/Foundations
- Mayor , City Council Members, and other elected officials
- Parents
- Students
- Classified and Confidential Employees Groups
- Site Administrators

What follows are my findings, observations and recommendations that I have made throughout the listening and learning operation through the first semester:

I. Board of Education

To be an effective Governance Team, the Board and Superintendent must develop a collaborative, positive, team-oriented and trusting relationship. These relationships must be established with individual board members and the Board collectively. During this Plan of Entry, the Superintendent worked with the Board of Education to discuss core values and beliefs, issues and matters of governance, management, and working relationships structures.

Entry Plan Activities:

- Dr. Marshall presented his Entry Plan to the Board of Education for Feedback.
- Dr. Marshall reviewed the Board of Education calendar/bylaws to assess continuity of governance.
- Dr. Marshall conducted breakfast/lunch/dinner meetings with the Board of Education to build positive, productive relationships.
- Dr. Marshall coordinated three retreats for the Board of Education to focus on shared values, initiate reflections on organizational structure, areas of improvement, and implementation of a systemic accountability system.
- The Board of Education Policies and Administrative Regulations were reviewed.

Initial Impressions and Observations:

- The LBUSD Board of Education places the well being of students as a first priority and is committed to student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps.
- The LBUSD Board of Education is receptive to quality Professional Development.

Recommendations:

- The LBUSD Board of Education should continue to implement the protocols that were developed at our recent trainings.
- The LBUSD Board of Education should conduct at least three Governance team retreats to ensure that the organization is moving in a direction that is board driven
- The LBUSD Board of Education should consider establishing exactly what types of data they will review periodically, throughout the year, and annually.
- The LBUSD Board of Education committees should be augmented and continue to serve as conduit to the Board of Education and the larger Los Banos community.
- The Board of Education needs to establish a regular procedure for updating its policies.

II. Data Analysis, Document Review, and Organizational Analysis

One of the key roles of the Superintendent is to review the system of instruction and school environmental factors of all students residing in the district and improve instruction as indicated by data. Additionally, as the superintendent is ultimately responsible, it is important for the superintendent to have a working knowledge of the many facets that is division of the district encompasses. Child Nutrition, Educational Services, Human Resources, Facilities, Maintenance, and Operations each play a key role in this work. Subsequently, each department was reviewed carefully to determine how it maximizes support and services to schools using the continuous improvement model.

Entry Plan Activities:

- Dr. Marshall and cabinet members conducted analysis and examined a wide variety of data sources, particularly student achievement data, to discern trends, patterns, areas of accomplishments and opportunities for improvement. Consistent with the protocols set by the California Accountability System including district's most recent California Dashboard. Student outcomes on standardized tests, value added data, graduation rates, AP course taking and passing rates and other relevant indicators were disaggregated by program, ethnicity and carefully examined. in the were disaggregated by program and ethnicity, and carefully examined.
- Dr. Marshall and cabinet members carefully examined suspension and expulsion data/reports.
- In addition, administrative and resource indicators were closely reviewed.
- The current budget development process as well as the LCAP process was assessed, as was 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 were also thoroughly examined.
- Written reports and presentations on utilization of LBUSD resources, personnel, organization, leadership and/or academic outcomes were reviewed.
- Dr. Marshall reviewed key district financial materials, budget, most recent audit, and grants.
- Dr. Marshall conducted one-on-one meetings with direct reports on academics, budget, operations, and human resources.
- Dr. Marshall reviewed district's financial projections, resource allocation and budgeting processes; assessed how district's budget and budgeting process is aligned to support student achievement.
- Dr. Marshall conducted meetings with legal counsels 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.
- Dr. Marshall reviewed employee group contracts and negotiation plans to find out what the role of the superintendent has been in negotiations.
- Dr. Marshall received updates on plans to further apply for federal and state funds.
- Dr. Marshall reviewed district's safety and crisis communication plan (s).
- Dr. Marshall examined the effectiveness of LBUSD's data management system, especially around student achievement, budget, and human resources.
- Dr. Marshall ensured all necessary plans and preparations are in place for a smooth opening of school.

Initial Impressions and Observations:

- While overall student achievement has remained stable, performance of the elementary schools improved significantly in 2016/2017. Growth rates exceeded county and state averages.
- There is a strong program for English Learner Students.
- Similar to county and state trends, the district achievement gap between African American and Hispanic students and White students has remained constant.
- 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 masks where there is uneven performance.
- It is not consistent from site to site how data is used to inform instruction or change practice.
- Special Education continues to be a challenge as it relates to programming and local interpretation of the related State/Federal Laws.

- The Fiscal Department is an LBUSD strength. This was confirmed by our most recent audit report.
- There is a perception from sites that the district office sometimes struggles to recognize individual site needs.
- The Human Resources Department has made great strides in establishing a diverse workforce.
- There are dire facility needs that include overcrowding, inadequate athletic facilities, and routine maintenance.

Recommendations:

- There is a need for a Comprehensive Strategic Plan that will align the district's activities, local plans and outcomes.
- There is a need for a clear district wide academic plan (i.e. a curriculum framework) that outlines our course of action. The plan should be inclusive of horizontal and vertical dialogues between the district and the school sites.
- A process for examining curricular strengths and challenges throughout the district needs to be established.
- The district/Board need to establish a very clear picture of what data the community can expect to see from the district every year.
- The district needs to develop specific strategies to address the outcomes for African-American Students, as we have been identified for Differentiated Assistance in this area.
- As funding allows, more programs should be added that increase student rigor and support more post secondary option for students (AVID, JROTC, Community College Partnerships)
- Training in PBIS and Restorative Justice should be supported to reduce suspension and expulsion rates.
- There should be increased professional development around student achievement implemented at Board, district leadership and site level.
- There should be a district level audit of interim benchmark practices to answer the following questions:
 - A. Are there effective processes for setting and communicating benchmarks?
 - B. What is the quality of the interim assessments used in the district?
 - C. Are interim assessments used to provide feedback on a regular basis to inform instruction?
 - D. How is this formative assessment data disseminated and used at the student, classroom, school and district levels?
 - E. Are we using the results of our benchmark assessments effectively?
- The district needs to continue to use and present financial data in a transparent manner to illustrate that the district is making fiscally responsible decisions.
- The district needs to communicate clarity regarding how our revenues are slowing while our expenses are growing and how this trend impacts the sites and the district.
- The district needs to develop plan for increasing revenues at local level inclusive of being more proactive in securing external funds.
- The district needs to develop a Master Facilities Plan to building new schools and support existing school sites.
- The Human Resources Department should continue its efforts to develop a more "*Customer Friendly Approach*"
- The district needs to develop a formal recruitment plan.

III. Community Engagements and District Communications

A superintendent builds relationships with the district's stakeholders. This includes parents, of the business community, and individuals who live in the community without direct links to the school district.

Entry Plan Activities:

- Dr. Marshall reached out to meet as many partners as possible to ensure that all voices had the opportunity to be heard.
- Dr. Marshall has joined the Los Banos Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs.
- Dr. Marshall has participated in many community events in Los Banos.
- Dr. Marshall has conducted regular visits each LBUSD school site.
- A Community Café' was held on October 19, 2017. Community Cafés are typically gatherings hosted by the school district where participants obtain information about the school district and then contribute to guided/structured conversations. The meetings are open to the entire Los Banos community and are designed to gauge stakeholder perceptions of the district in addition to listening to suggestions and ideas the community has to improve the educational experiences for the students. Nearly 300 people attended our first event and we were very excited by the amount of staff members who joined us for the festivities. Participants at our event were asked three questions:
 - Tell us about yourself
 - Tell us what you like about LBUSD
 - Give us suggestions on how to improve LBUSD

An online survey was also established for those who could not attend the event but wished to provide feedback.

Initial Impressions and Observations:

The repeated strengths from the community meetings:

- The school district offers and supports a variety of parent outreach programs.
- The school district is focused on student achievement.
- The instructional staff is a definite strength.
- The school district/community is welcoming.
- The district is increasing its efforts at partnership outreach.
- There are rich Arts and Athletics programs.
- The AG/FFA Program is district strength.
- The district compensates its employees well.
- The school district works well with city of Los Banos.
- Employee associations and the district work well together.
- A means for providing intervention for students exists.

The repeated areas for growth:

- The district struggles to meet the needs of underperforming students.
- The district needs to do a better job of communication with parents and a better job of including parents in the decision making process.
- Overcrowded schools were cited as an area of concern.
- The district needs a Multi-Tiered System of Supports for teachers as well as students.

Recommendations:

- District and sites need to align communication policies and practices.
- Regular online dialogue opportunities for stakeholder feedback should be available.
- Community Cafes (or other listening posts) should be continued in the school district.
- The Superintendent should establish an Advisory Committee as a regular mechanism to obtain regular feedback.

IV. Media Relations

For better or worse, the superintendent is the face of the school district and should look for opportunities to partner with the media.

Entry Plan Activities:

- The Superintendent engaged the local media outlets to introduce himself to Los Banos Community and deepen his awareness of issues important to the Los Banos Stakeholders.
- The Superintendent sought to better understand both the internal and external communications opportunities and environment in Los Banos.
- The Superintendent attempted to partner with the news media in the discourse around educational improvement and providing optimal learning environments for students.

Initial Impressions and Observations:

- The Media is receptive towards positive discourse with the district.
- Social Media is an effective method to communicate with our stakeholders.
- There are untapped opportunities in Los Banos as it pertains to better telling our story.

Recommendations:

- The District should continue to strive for a positive relationship with the media.
- The District should increase its presence on Social Media to facilitate better branding.
- The District should produce a regular newsletter that highlights our school's successes.

V. Technical Expertise

Technical assistance consultants/partners provide a wide range of customized supports to help school districts meet the needs of their students.

Entry Plan Activities:

- The superintendent identified external consultants (*and related agreements*) who have worked with the school district in various departments for several years.
- The superintendent has attempted to examine the outcomes of those associations.

Initial Impressions and Observations:

- Much of the consultant work is centered in the business/facilities area.
- Agreements do exist with multiple experts in the area of curriculum and technology.
- There is not a defined system to gauge the effectiveness of external consultant/experts.

Recommendations:

- Relationships with consultants in educational realm should be augmented to maximize their effectiveness.
- An audit of consultant agreements needs to take place to minimize duplication of services.
- A system of for regular communication with consultants needs to be established to monitor progress.

VI. Next Steps

We will begin to chart the direction and vision for the Los Banos Unified School District. A deliberate action plan with identified target outcomes will be created, providing the framework to begin the districts' strategic planning process.

- The school district will use the collected information to begin the work necessary to plot a future vision and direction for the school district
- The school district will work with school board members and district stakeholders to begin identifying and creating actionable strategies necessary to understand and realize the vision.
- The school district will establish a long term Strategic Plan by December 2018 (estimated).