The Watertown Public Schools system is dedicated to giving children a superior education. As the incoming superintendent, the Board has charged me with providing relevant, rigorous, and engaging instruction that challenges all students to reach their potential; while maintaining strong relationships with students, families, and our community. To achieve this goal, I have outlined a ninety-day entry plan which will provide an opportunity to gather critical information about the needs of our students, staff, families and community. This plan reflects my strong desire to make a thoughtful and deliberate transition into leading this diverse and high achieving school district.

This entry plan has four broad goals that represent my philosophy of district leadership and will focus my work as I transition into this new role. To accomplish these goals, I will do the following:

• **Listen** – Through formal and informal meetings, I will engage with students, teachers, families, principals, school district administrators and other WPS employees, community and business members, and state and local leaders, to hear about the significant accomplishments and greatest challenges in WPS. Efforts to collect feedback from and build relationships with a variety of stakeholders will establish trust and demonstrate my respect for the community’s diverse needs.

• **Learn** – I will analyze student achievement data, explore our core curriculum and instructional approach, and review existing district policies and implementation of reforms. Through one-on-one meetings with district leaders and department heads, I will analyze the current strengths, strategies and opportunities for improvement to ensure optimal operations across all areas.

• **Partner** – Establish positive relationships and build rapport with the Board, all levels of WPS staff, business partners and community, state and local leaders.

• **Plan** – Review the upcoming capital improvement projects, budget development process and upcoming legislative agenda, and establish district priorities that will serve as the foundation for a long-term strategic plan.

“A GENUINE LEADER IS NOT A SEARCHER FOR CONSENSUS, BUT A MOLDER OF CONSENSUS.” –Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#WhoIsWatertown
Ensuring all students graduate with the necessary skills to succeed in college and/or a career is the responsibility of all employees, and it must guide the learning in all classrooms. To achieve this end, teachers must deeply understand instructional excellence, possess the ability to employ high-yield instructional practices and academic rigor, and have access to a robust and comprehensive curriculum that meets the needs of diverse learners.

**Entry Actions**
- Evaluate the effectiveness and alignment of early childhood programming in building literacy skills.
- Establish a protocol to review the instructional program, practices, curriculum and support materials for evidence of effectiveness in improving student achievement.
- Assess the effectiveness of current initiatives in order to reduce “priority clutter” and focus on strategies determined to have the greatest positive impact on student outcomes.
- Assess the effectiveness of professional learning on building teacher capacity that aligns with students’ academic, social and emotional needs.
- Evaluate the use of formative assessments and their alignment with the instructional program.
- Conduct a needs assessment of teaching and learning to determine training needs, quality of direct support to schools, areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Review the digital learning/instructional technology plan and assess its alignment to district goals of educational excellence.
- Review previous budgets to look for alignment between spending and the district’s focus areas, and to analyze the return on investment for current expenditures.

A strong partnership between the Board and the superintendent is essential in meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of WPS students. My aim is to develop a trusting and collaborative partnership with the Board by establishing positive relationships with each Board member as well as with the Board as a whole. This entry plan will cultivate an effective and synergistic relationship with the Board and other key members of the leadership team.

**Entry Actions**
- Engage in one-on-one meetings with Board members to deepen relationships and broaden perspectives.
- Meet regularly with the Board Chair and Vice Chair to establish communication protocols, roles and responsibilities, norms of behavior and interaction, expectations for first year and agenda setting.
- Chart a future-focused direction collaboratively with the Board while focusing on shared values, self-evaluation, organizational structure and ongoing professional learning.
- Conduct school visits and attend community functions with Board members to develop priority areas that are student-centered and reflect stakeholders’ vision for WPS.
WPS is privileged to have a community that is committed to and invested in the success of our schools. It is essential to develop positive relationships with staff students, families, community and business members, and state and local leaders; and build student-centered coalitions. Through our efforts to collect feedback from and build relationships, I will establish trust and demonstrate my respect for our community’s diverse needs.

**Goal 3**  
**To establish respectful and responsive support to schools and foster a positive culture centered on educational excellence.**

The purpose of the district office is to ensure all students are college- and career-ready by providing direct and timely support to schools. Progressing towards this goal requires all district employees to reach high levels of performance in their respective areas, and to institutionalize policies and practices that support a culture of trust and a commitment to excellence.

**Entry Actions**
- Review the structure of the current central-office to maximize operational efficiency.
- Conduct a district-wide analysis to review existing systems, protocols and workflows to determine alignment, efficiency and coherence across the district.
- Review WPS’ financial projections, federal programs, resource allocation and the process for building the annual operating budget; and assess how it is aligned to support achievement by all students.
- Establish an organizational norm for open, effective and consistent communication throughout the district and within our community through structured meetings with union representatives, principals and teachers, and through open forums with staff.
- Review WPS’ safety and crisis communication plans and make any changes or adjustments needed.

**Goal 4**  
**To build stakeholder trust and confidence through open, honest communication and positive relationships**

WPS is privileged to have a community that is committed to and invested in the success of our schools. It is essential to develop positive relationships with staff students, families, community and business members, and state and local leaders; and build student-centered coalitions. Through our efforts to collect feedback from and build relationships, I will establish trust and demonstrate my respect for our community’s diverse needs.

**Entry Actions**
- Meet with community leaders and elected officials—and union representatives—to identify shared goals and opportunities for collaboration and lay the foundation for ongoing partnerships that benefit the staff and students of WPS.
- Identify critical stakeholders and establish routine meetings, communication protocols and opportunities for ongoing dialogue.
- Establish an organizational norm for open, effective and consistent communication throughout the district and within our community through structured meetings with established parent and student organizations, school-based leadership teams through open forums with students, families and community members.
- Host multiple town hall meetings to gather community input and ongoing dialogue on issues of student achievement, school improvement and equity.
- Meet with local media outlets and education reporters, to establish a protocol for regular media briefings to share district information.
- Build relationships with the faith community by attending services at area houses of worship and provide opportunities to listen to concerns and recommendations.
**Phase One**

During Phase One, I will use the data that is gathered during the listening and learning phase to develop a summary report and presentation. This information will outline my findings and observations, and identify next steps. The summary information will serve as another resource to help inform the Board on the district’s goals, strategic focus areas, and planning. Information from Phase One will also be shared with staff members and made available to the public.

**Key Questions**

1. What should I know about the Watertown community?
2. What are the strengths of WPS that should be sustained?
3. What are the challenges facing WPS?
4. What are some of the opportunities that WPS needs to explore further or develop?
5. Is there anything else you want me to know about WPS and our community?

**Conclusion**

I recognize that I am transitioning into the superintendent role during a precarious period for public education in Connecticut. As a community, we are unsure how the political climate and funding changes will impact our schools.

In this climate of uncertainty, I am committed to continuing Watertown Public Schools’ focus on high academic performance, quality education and community involvement. The comprehensive findings from my entry plan will be compiled and shared with the Board and all stakeholders. These findings will serve as the foundation for developing a shared vision and strategic plan that will guide our work throughout my tenure.

**About Dr. Harrison**

Prior to joining the WPS team as the Superintendent, Dr. Rydell Harrison was the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS). Dr. Harrison began his career as a music teacher in New Jersey, and has 20 years in education, working across all three levels. In CHCCS, Dr. Harrison also served as Executive Director of Professional Development and Project ADVANCE, and was charged with developing a strategic compensation plan for teachers and support staff that ties professional learning to salaries. In 2016, Dr. Harrison received the Award for Excellence in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools District Administration. Prior to working in the district office, Dr. Harrison served as an elementary and middle school principal and assistant principal in Greensboro, NC and was the principal at Phillips Middle School in CHCCS.

Dr. Harrison holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Rutgers University and a Master of Divinity from Duke University. He also holds a Master of School Administration, Specialist in Education and Doctor of Education in School Leadership from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Most importantly, Dr. Harrison is the father of five active sons whose ages range from 5 to 20, and is married to Monica, a licensed clinical social worker who uses her counseling background to keep the entire family in line!