



## ***INQUIRIES FOR SMOOTH TRANSITIONING*** **NEW SUPERINTENDENTS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

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### **TRANSITIONING: CRITICAL SUCCESS STRATEGIES FOR NEW LEADERS**

**SOURCE:** *The Council's New Superintendents Institute*

#### **QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING TRANSITION:**

- ❖ What has made you successful so far in your career?
- ❖ What strengths will apply to your new role?
- ❖ What new skills will you need to develop?
- ❖ What do you need to do to make the mental leap into the new position?

#### **AREAS OF EXPLORATION FOR THE FIRST 90 DAYS:**

- ❖ How has the district performed in the past; what data and benchmarks are used?
- ❖ What is the goal-setting process; what are past goals?
- ❖ What are the strengths of the district in its programs, finances, personnel structures, culture, and the political environment?
- ❖ Does the district have a vision and strategy? Do they seem aligned?
- ❖ Who are the leaders in the district and what are their perspectives on the district?
- ❖ Which are the key structures, policies, agreements (contracts), groups in the district; how well do they perform?
- ❖ What are the major challenges and opportunities that you can identify for the district? Are there new capabilities needed?
- ❖ What are the barriers to needed changes, e.g., what changes have been tried in the past and succeeded or failed? Why?
- ❖ What are the elements of the culture (norms, symbols, beliefs) that strengthen the district? That might need changing?

**QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY AND SECURE SOME EARLY WINS:**

- ❖ What are the most promising focal points for your early efforts?
- ❖ What items have an achievable urgency?
- ❖ Who are the people you need involved to achieve some small early successes?
- ❖ How will you communicate and reward the successes?

**THE FIRST SIX MONTHS - CONSIDERING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:**

- ❖ Has your district established goals (based on objective results) for this year, longer-range? If so, are they realistic?
- ❖ Do you perceive a district culture that supports high academic achievement? What are the attributes you are looking for?
- ❖ Do you and your staff feel comfortable in identifying good curriculum, good teaching and good student work?

**THE FIRST SIX MONTHS - CONSIDERING THE BUDGET:**

- ❖ Is your present budget adequate? Is your budget based on the priorities you feel are important for the school district?
- ❖ When will your budget development begin? Do you have a process- existing or proposed- to use for budget development?
- ❖ What goals and guidelines do you have in mind for budget development?

**QUESTIONS REGARDING SCHOOL NORMS AND COMMUNITY VALUES:**

- ❖ What are some famous/often repeated stories about our schools, the school district?
- ❖ If you had to describe the covenant between the schools and the community, what would it be?
- ❖ Are your schools doing as well as expected? What are the things that tell you this? What grade would you give them (A-F)?
- ❖ What do you think this community prizes most in its schools- sports, academics, good discipline, low cost, safety, etc.?
- ❖ Are there things the schools here do that they should not do, things that should change?

- ❖ If you were considering moving to this community, how would the schools influence your decision?
- ❖ What's the last news article you remember reading about your schools?
- ❖ Are your schools a good mirror of the community's values?
- ❖ Are you proud of your schools? How do you describe them to others who are unfamiliar with them?

**WHAT PARENTS LOOK FOR IN SCHOOLS (SCHOOL MATCH):**

- ❖ Competitive test scores; solid academics but not too rigorous as to intimidate;
- ❖ Accredited and/or recognized by a foundation, U.S. Department of Education;
- ❖ Competitive teacher salaries;
- ❖ Above national average in instructional expenditures;
- ❖ Small class size.

**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:**

- ❖ Are there questions you would add to these?
- ❖ What stakeholders should be part of this process? Would focus groups or different techniques work?
- ❖ How do you balance community norms and expectations with parent norms and expectations and staff norms and expectations?