

Hitting the Ground Learning

An entry plan for
Turnaround Superintendent
Harrison Peters

March 2020

Page intentionally left blank

“Genius and talent are equally distributed among all students. We need to make sure all students have equal opportunities.”

Harrison Peters

Providence Public Schools are at an inflection point. Fewer than two in 10 students are proficient in English and math, our school buildings need significant improvement and low expectations for students and adults are rampant throughout our education system. I understand what it’s like to be both a student and an educator in a struggling school system like ours and I have felt the despair that I know many of you feel right now.

And yet, I am hopeful. Education made all the difference in my life, and I know it can make that same difference for the students of Providence. We have an incredibly unique opportunity, with leadership from the state and city aligned with us, and I do not intend to squander this rare moment.

We cannot move forward if we leave the community behind. I will work diligently alongside the commissioner, students, families, educators and community leaders to transform this school district together.

We cannot expect change if we do not raise expectations. Our students deserve academic rigor. Let’s give them meaningful challenges to which they will rise.

We cannot undervalue the role educators play in shaping young lives. Our teachers are our most effective agents of change. They deserve more school-based supports and meaningful professional development opportunities to set them up for greater success.

I believe in the commissioner’s vision that, by connecting our schools with our families and community, prioritizing excellence in learning, building world class talent in our schools, and radically reimagining district business and operations practices, we can truly transform our district. “Hitting the Ground Learning” is a plan I have developed for my first months as superintendent, to help connect schools and communities and to achieve much-needed changes to the student experience in Providence. And hitting the ground learning is what I have been doing over the past several weeks, visiting every single school and gaining insight from many valuable community partners.

Thank you for welcoming me to this great city! I am thrilled to be here in service to the young people of our district and am so excited to work with you.

Harrison Peters
Turnaround Superintendent
Providence Public Schools

*“Never doubt
that a small
group of
thoughtful,
committed
citizens can
change the
world.”*

Margaret Mead



Our diverse communities will play a substantive role in charting a new path for Providence Public Schools. I will listen to and learn from students, parents/caregivers, educators and citizens. I will also take immediate action to make sure our schools are welcoming for ALL families and begin to work hand-in-hand with non-profit, faith, higher education, and business communities to provide the critical supports necessary to meet our students' needs. We use the plural of communities because it means we intend to engage with all interested groups, including teachers, parents, students, central office staff, activists, local government and taxpayers.

We will better engage communities in our schools by:

1.1	Visiting every PPSD school and facility to meet with students, principals, teachers and support staff.
1.2	Holding open office hours to hear directly from community members about their concerns and priorities for the district.
1.3	Meeting with state, city and civic leaders to better understand their strategic priorities and to coordinate our efforts.
1.4	Assessing district communications protocols and processes for families and launching protocols that meet family needs.
1.5	Engaging with parent councils, education-related organizations, business and civic groups, student groups, caregivers and welfare agencies, university partners and the philanthropic community to develop plans for partnerships.
1.6	Convening multiple student roundtables, from grades PK-12, to understand student concerns and discuss opportunities to elevate student voice in the district moving forward.
1.7	Holding a Facebook Town Hall to engage parents, community members and others to learn about their priorities for the district.
1.8	Determining the level to which our parent engagement—registration/enrollment, the parent support center, etc.—are customer-service oriented and efficient in serving families.
1.9	Reviewing the district transportation policy to ensure it meets the needs of our schools, students and families.
1.10	Developing a set of professional development experiences for all district employees—from teachers to central office—that focuses on improving customer service and responsiveness to families and the community.

“We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. ... This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

Martin Luther King Jr.



To increase academic achievement, we must be prepared to deliver high quality, standards-aligned, rigorous and culturally responsive curriculum to every student in Providence Public Schools.

We will work to close equity gaps and increase proficiency for all students. To do this, we must maintain inclusive, future-ready learning environments and build pathways aligned to student needs, interests and careers while prioritizing school culture and taking a whole-student approach.

We will begin prioritizing excellence in learning in our schools by:

2.1	Becoming part of the Community Design Team as they work to reimagine the Providence Public School experience.
2.2	Developing a professional learning and continuous improvement plan to support teachers and schools in the implementation of the new aligned, high-quality ELA and math curriculum across elementary schools.
2.3	Reviewing secondary curriculum quality and developing a plan for ensuring the selection of high-quality, aligned curriculum across the district.
2.4	Defining “equity” as a district, and beginning to collect key data, determine supports, and develop measures to evaluate district progress against equity goals.
2.5	Creating an achievable action plan for meeting district goals related to multilingual learner services under the district’s settlement with the Department of Justice.
2.6	Undertaking school-specific performance reviews of every school in the district to inform school improvement planning and develop a comprehensive vision for increasing equitable access to high-quality schools.
2.7	Launching a task force to develop recommendations for appropriately implementing “restorative justice” practices in all PPSD schools and supporting teachers and schools in its implementation.
2.8	Assessing and redesigning the central office structure and services to redirect resources and staff to schools.
2.9	Working with the commissioner and the City of Providence to complete a revised school facilities capital plan that priorities emergency repairs while also aligning long-term facility improvements with the district’s educational plan.
2.10	Launching a new procurement process that ensures that principals, teachers, and students receive the resources they need when they need them.
2.11	Creating a set of school climate and culture initiatives to be launched at all grade levels in the 2020-21 school year.
2.12	Adopting a district budget that, using Ernst and Young’s comprehensive review of all district spending practices, prioritizes efficacy, efficiency and equity and sends money closer to schools.
2.13	Reviewing and analyzing the provision of services to differently-abled learners across the district.
2.14	Beginning a process for collecting and tracking socio-emotional health and growth data of students beginning with the 2020-21 school year.
2.15	Collaborating with afterschool and extracurricular program leaders on a vision for aligning programming more directly with the district and its schools.
2.16	Working with the mayor and the City of Providence to expand upon the Mayor’s 2020 Passport to Summer Learning program.

*“A teacher affects
eternity;
he can never
tell where
his influence
stops.”*

Henry B. Adams



The teachers and school leaders in our system must be set up for success. We must develop a highly skilled and diverse workforce. To do this, we must put professional learning at the center of improvement, create flexible pathways into the teaching and school leadership professions and provide leadership development opportunities for all. I will immediately get to work in building a staff that understands and prioritizes racial equity, is committed to the limitless potential of our students and understands student needs.

We will begin developing world class talent in our schools by:

3.1	Launching a recruitment campaign focused on attracting diverse and effective teachers who are committed to serving in our highest-need areas and schools.
3.2	Refining the district's model of staff support and supervision to transform how the district supports and supervises principals and how principals support and supervise teachers.
3.3	Developing a plan for identifying, supporting, developing, staffing and retaining our highest-need schools with diverse and effective teachers and leaders.
3.4	Sustaining a professional learning plan and vision for the district that supports the implementation of culturally responsive and high-quality curriculum, the appropriate application of restorative justice practices, the serving of our highest-need student populations and the building of a staff culture of racial equity.
3.5	Analyzing existing professional development to ensure teachers are getting the support they need to succeed in the classroom.
3.6	Launching a district task force charged with significantly reducing vacancies in the 2020-21 school year.
3.7	Meeting with leadership from each local talent partner and collaborating on a plan with each to better support the district's talent needs.
3.8	Collaborating with each employee union and developing plans to expand opportunities for strengthening the capacity of their members.



*“Continuous effort —
not strength or
intelligence —
is the key to unlocking
our potential.”*

Winston Churchill

My commitment to public education goes beyond a professional career path. It is an avocation born from personal experience.

I was raised by my grandmother who only had a second-grade education. I was completely dependent upon teachers to help me reach my academic potential. I remember the 10th grade teacher who said I was not college material. I also remember the teacher who said, “I love you, I believe in you and I refuse to allow you to fail.”

The messages we give our children and the expectations we set for them can make the difference between success and failure. That is why for nearly two decades, I’ve been fighting for children across the country. I am thrilled to be serving the students, families and staff of Providence Public Schools.

At the conclusion of this entry plan’s implementation, I will report out on what I have learned from students, families and the community. I will also report on whether I fulfilled the commitments I have made in this plan and my vision for implementing the district’s transformation plan moving forward.

Thank you for entrusting me with this honor, and I look forward to achieving extraordinary outcomes for all students.