



Ames[™]
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Dr. Julious T. Lawson

100 DAY PLAN

R E P O R T

Introduction

In my first days as Superintendent of the Ames Community School District, I shared my 100-Day Entry Plan. The entry plan allowed me to listen and learn from all segments of the school community during my first months on the job. To lead for the success of every student within the Ames CSD, I enlisted the involvement of the entire school community—students, staff, families, caregivers, business leaders, and community partners. In addition, I offered multiple engagement opportunities to capture the voices of stakeholders to contribute to developing a shared vision for the District before moving into our strategic planning process. Thank you to everyone who contributed to my learning which made the work of this Post 100 Day Plan Report possible.

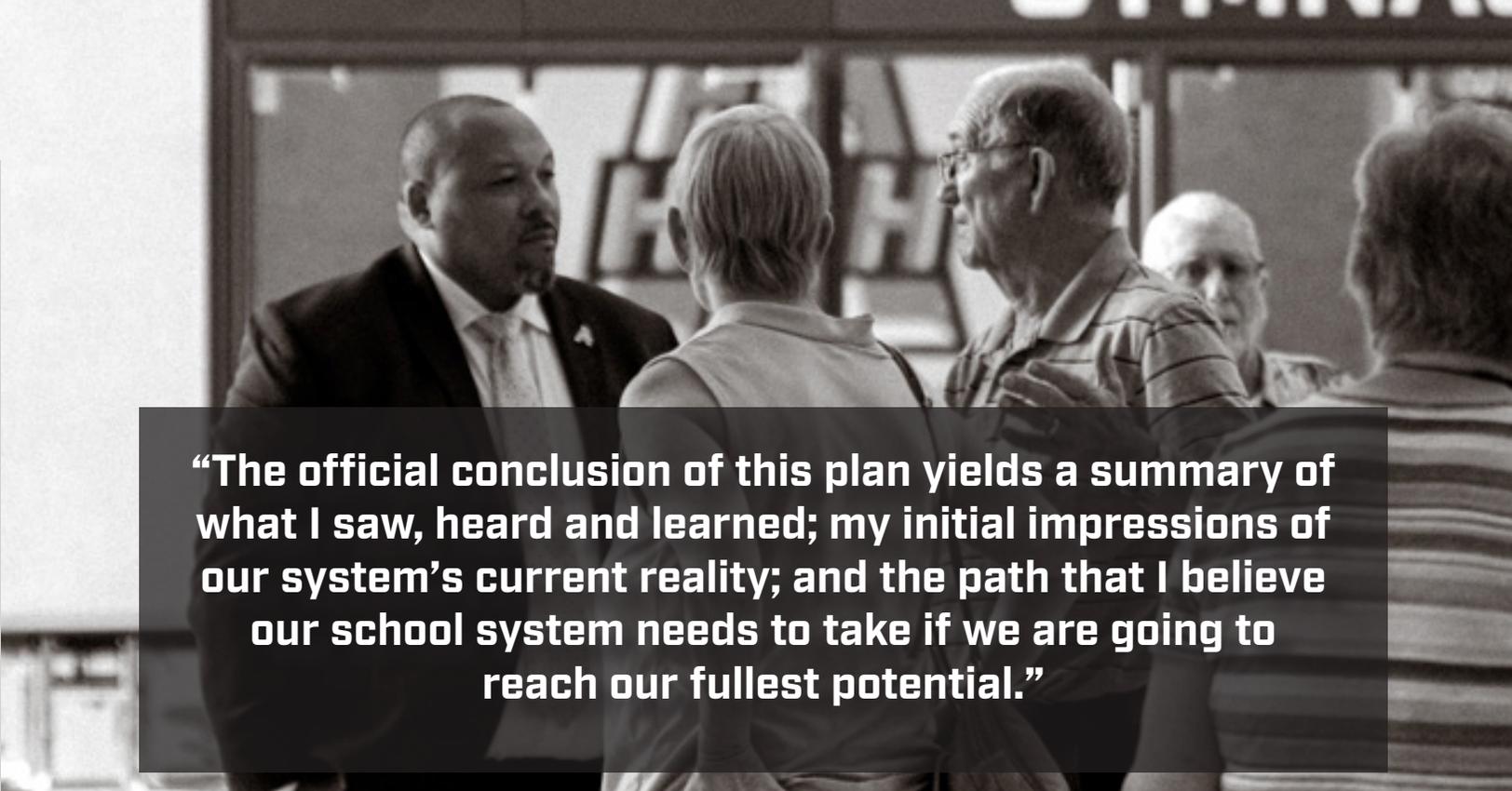
As Superintendent, my entry plan was developed to assess the current state of significant areas of Ames Community School District and chart the course for my transition into the role of Superintendent. It was the blueprint for learning more about the District by assessing our strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement and determining the best course of action for our students, community, and staff moving forward. The plan focused on five critical areas of work for engagement: Governance, Student Achievement, Community and Public Relations, Talent Management, and Management & Operations.



Entry-Plan Design

The entry plan was designed to address the following goals:

- Develop a strong, collaborative relationship with the Board of Directors and to determine the goals, expectations, and foundation for Ames Community School District's strategic plan.
- To ensure an effective, efficient, and orderly transition of leadership, keeping the focus on increased student achievement for every student.
- To create opportunities for the new superintendent to listen broadly and deeply to a multitude of stakeholders and gain a comprehensive understanding of Ames CSD.
- To proactively ensure that all voices, not just those who traditionally avail themselves to collaborate with the school system, are heard and engaged in the process of continuous improvement.
- To identify and execute activities that must happen immediately to ensure an outstanding beginning to the school year.
- To build excitement and momentum for Ames CSD's vision, mission, and future strategic plan, while also establishing the commitment to engage in needed improvement.



“The official conclusion of this plan yields a summary of what I saw, heard and learned; my initial impressions of our system’s current reality; and the path that I believe our school system needs to take if we are going to reach our fullest potential.”

First 100 Days

During my first 100 days, I made it a point to meet with as many stakeholders as possible. I met individually with our principals, spoke with teachers and staff during the all-staff breakfast, and visited every school. I got to know our current Board and former members; I met with former Ames CSD and neighboring districts’ superintendents. I met Mayor John Haila, other leaders from City of Ames departments, Ames city council members, and civic and business leaders. I spent time listening to employees from each Ames CSD department and learned about the work of our dedicated staff, who serves as the backbone of our organization. In addition, I visited various businesses, community partners, and Iowa State University.

I am fortunate to have spent considerable time learning from our teachers, staff, and school leaders. After every conversation, I walked away, impressed with the passion and commitment they expressed for our students. Our staff clearly understands the unique perspectives that our students bring. They want a voice in our strategies to develop well-rounded students, and they deserve it.

Finally, I leveraged a team to review the District office and all schools comprehensively. I was impressed with the willingness of our school community to be open about our strengths and opportunities for growth. This learning has provided me with a solid understanding of our current reality.

Looking back, the moments I cherished most during my first 100 days were those spent in our schools. Whether in a classroom, school hallway, or playground, our students displayed curiosity about the world, a passion for learning, and a genuine desire to build a strong community. If our community works collectively and collaboratively to create supportive learning environments that engage every student, our children can meet any expectation we set for them.



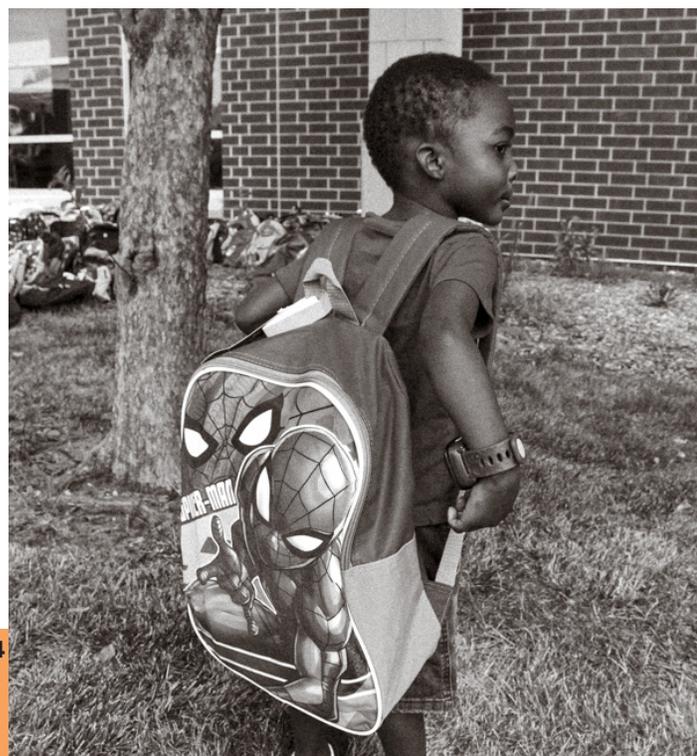
Key Insights

After reflecting on my many conversations with members of the Ames CSD school community, school visits, performance data analyses, and the results from my District Quality Review (DQR), several key insights surfaced. Centering work around these insights will help us move from our current state closer to realizing our desired state. With extreme focus, we will continue to build upon our strengths and maximize our growth opportunities.

1

Insight One: We have all the necessary resources in our community to meet our kids' needs.

The community of Ames is deeply committed to the success of our school district. Our parents, teachers, and staff are highly supportive. Moreover, our community has shown unwavering support for schools by funding our Foundation and passing a bond referendum to build our new high school. We have strong business partners willing to fund our programs, initiatives, and student activities. We are incredibly fortunate in this area. The fact that our community has the financial means to withstand the economic ebbs and flows of the country is impressive. The talent in our community and everyone's commitment to our students, teachers, staff, and organization is atypical. However, the Ames CSD has to better communicate, support, and align our resources to reach our long-term goals. We must, as a community, commit to resourcing the educational programs that we believe are integral to improving outcomes for all students.



2

Insight Two: We are a “frustrated” organization.

The Ames CSD continues to be influenced by several internal and external factors that create uncertainty and angst. However, the following items seem to have the most significant impact on our system:

- Leadership instability at the district level.
- Limited positions to effectively support schools.
- Staffing shortages.
- The adoption of multiple initiatives and new curricula has created a tremendous amount of stress on staff. Some instructional programs have either been poorly rolled out or completely abandoned, which has left many wary of reform efforts.
- The lack of effective communication systems creates unnecessary barriers to improving student outcomes. At times, the District functions as a system of schools rather than a unified school system. Additionally, communication systems inside the district office must be clarified and improved. We should improve communication with staff about changes that have an impact on their work as well as our overall educational landscape. Lastly, the absence of a single coherent message inhibits many community members and partners from understanding how they can champion our efforts to improve student achievement.
- A significant lack of substitute teachers.

All in all, individuals in and around our organization display frustration, leading to emotional and affective responses that are counterproductive to our efforts to improve student achievement. This is a serious concern, and we have begun to engage multiple teams to develop effective and efficient systems that will empower our entire staff to increase productivity, teamwork, and morale.

3

Our performance is hindered by our lack of strategic focus.

If the Ames CSD is to return to its desired level of greatness, we must improve our focus, cohesion, and alignment. A clear strategic plan is necessary to ensure our ability to guide meaningful and effective work at all levels. Our stakeholder groups need clarification on how their work contributes to realizing the district vision. The current organizational structure must promote a coherent, convergent approach to continuous school improvement. We need more innovative planning and problem-solving structures that will lead us to the high levels of student performance we desire. It is imperative that we solve this deficit sooner rather than later.

Focus 1: Development of a strategic plan

Over the next several months, we will develop a strategic plan to guide the work of the District. Our challenge is rethinking how we do things and identifying the systems that need to be put into place in order for us to move our system forward. Our strategic plan will help identify a role for everyone involved in supporting student achievement. It will help employees to understand the expectations and the metrics used to measure success. My observation is that, as an organization, we care deeply about every student who walks through our doors. We have committed partners and caring parents. We have everything we need to get the job done. A strategic plan will drive us toward higher levels of performance.

Focus 2: Establish an efficient and strategically focused organization that has the capacity to improve student achievement and operations.

The District employs extremely hard-working, committed individuals, and we need to develop systems that allow everyone to work more effectively and efficiently. When we couple our dedicated team members with an organized and effective system, we will see that possibilities are limitless.



4

We all want what is best for our students and community.

Throughout my listening and learning, the desire to provide what is best for students and the community were two common themes that emerged. Children grow in the context of their community, so adults need to model behaviors we expect from our students. As they develop within their smaller community environments (a music circle, an art class, a reading corner), they begin to understand the broader society as a whole — what actions work and what do not, what values, sensitivities, and desires we share. I engaged with many great people with a wide range of viewpoints and philosophies. With this in mind, I am hopeful that our respect for one another allows us to engage in thoughtful discourse with civility. Our children are watching. The brilliant minds here understand that creating a positive school community becomes the supportive, positive, uplifting foundation of a child's life. Toward that end, we all want what is best for our community and the students of the Ames Community School District.

Next Steps

My insights are derived from my 100-day listening, learning, and leading tour. Because of these insights, I am narrowing our focus to two key areas that will be an integral part of our ability to improve student outcomes at every level. These two priorities will become our “advantage.” They will enable us to not only address our District’s needs but also allow us to develop systems of continuous improvement.

1. Development of a Strategic Plan
2. Establish an efficient and strategically focused organization that can improve student achievement and operations.

Over the year, you can expect to see the following improvements that will enable us to become a high-performing school District:

- We will continue adopting rigorous curricula that contribute to our students’ high school success.
- We will develop clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations for every level of the organization.
- We will focus our District office, principals, and teachers on the work that matters most to guarantee student learning.
- Using data, we will direct resources and personnel to meet the needs of each of our schools.
- We will continue to develop two-way communication protocols that allow for transparent communication with all stakeholders.
- We will continue to host listening and learning opportunities that allow us to garner suggestions and ideas for improvement.
- We will develop a robust professional development program focusing on all our staff members’ needs.

In closing, we need to realize that we are not changing things just for the sake of change. Instead, my goal is to capitalize on our strengths and find ways to minimize our challenges. Considering everything, we have an incredible opportunity ahead of us. Furthermore, by tapping into all of the resources that we have in our community, we will develop an appropriate plan of action and unleash the talent that exists within our District. I am confident that we will do great things together.

I look forward to working with you!

Warm regards,



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Ames. Forward. Together.