

The First 100 Days...

Superintendent Entry Report

Dear Friends,

It has been an exciting few months in my new job at District 65. I have spent a lot of time in the role of student – listening and learning from parents, teachers, experts and community members. They had much to share and I am grateful for their willingness to meet with me and talk to me. Please keep talking. Working together is the only way for us to ensure success for all.

As part of our ongoing dialogue and work together, I thought it would be helpful to share my reflections on what I have heard so far. The information I gathered over my first 100 days as superintendent provides a great foundation for moving into the next stage of our work and has directly informed the strategic planning process by providing the committee focus areas.

This is a wonderful community, profoundly committed to education and the promise it holds for all children. My family and I have strong roots here and share this commitment. My parents met here as undergraduates at Northwestern, my wife is a graduate of Nichols and ETHS, my three children are graduates of Oakton and Chute, and my oldest is a graduate of ETHS. I have been involved in community activities over the past 16 years and have proudly supported the Evanston/Skokie public schools.



I started my career as a middle-school math and social studies teacher and basketball coach. I have since worked in public policy organizations, national foundations and at the district level in several cities. Becoming superintendent of District 65 represents a great coming together of my personal and professional experiences, beliefs and aspirations. And I come to this job with some guiding principles that resonate with what I have heard in my conversations over the last few months...

Support our terrific educators and staff. Our educators and staff are the backbone of our work and they need our support. Educators need professional supports so that they can in turn support the success of all District 65 students.

Leadership matters. I am personally committed to transparency, building trust, making proactive decisions based on facts, and setting ambitious goals. As the superintendent, I will encourage and support this kind of leadership from the central office to the principals' offices, to every school and classroom in the district.

We cannot do it alone. Teachers, students, families, community members and partners all have a stake in the success of District 65. It is critical for us to build strong relationships with all families and community partners and to maintain our commitment to effective and welcoming customer service. To support the success of all children we must work together, share ideas and concerns, and collaborate in positive and creative ways.

Nice matters. Our district needs to be a welcoming place where children, families, educators and the community at large feel welcome to ask questions and participate in all we do.

Every child, every day, whatever it takes. I come to work every day thinking about how I am going to ensure the success of each student in District 65 – and I am not alone. I believe our educators and community as a whole agree that we can and must do whatever it takes to support success for all. A deep commitment to equity and providing what is best for all students in an inclusive and supportive environment must drive everything we do.

I extend my thanks to all in the Evanston/Skokie community for welcoming me to District 65. We have a lot to do. We also have the best community, schools, educators, families and students. There is no limit to what we can accomplish together.

Warmest regards,

Paul Goren



Listen...

Evanston/Skokie District 65 is an amazing community of educators, students, families and community members and partners. This community shares a deep commitment to education, to children and to the belief that through education *anything* is possible for *every* child.

This is a community worth listening to. As a new superintendent, I set out to hear from the community and to get insights on what is working, how to support what is working, and how to expand those efforts; and to identify the district's needs and challenges and what we can do to address them.

Meeting with the members of the Evanston/Skokie District 65 community over the summer and early fall has been a high priority for my administration and me. We are committed to maintaining an ongoing dialogue that will continue to inform our work to support every child, every day, by whatever it takes. So far, I have met with:



Community members and partners.

I met with over 100 community members and partners already and these meetings continue. Through conversations with parents, social service providers, elected officials, higher education faculty, and faith community leaders have come tremendous insights on the broader community's role in supporting children, the important partnerships that exist, and ones that should be forged.

Students and families.

I met with many parents and students as the school year began. Going forward, the strategic planning process is the first of many opportunities to hear from the true center of District 65, with parents serving on committees and numerous focus groups for both students and families scheduled in the coming weeks.

Teachers.

While many teachers are off during the summer, I took every chance I could to introduce myself early on and talk to the district's committed teachers. Also, I now meet weekly with the president of the District 65 Educators' Council. The opening day of school event brought all of the district's teachers together to celebrate the start of school and we set the tone going forward by thanking each and every District 65 educator for their hard work. Now that the school year is underway, members of my administration and I are doing intensive visits to each school that will include opportunities to hear from teachers and open the door to an ongoing dialogue.

Principals.

I met with every principal over the summer and heard about their individual schools and the goals they have for themselves and their schools. Together, we are also developing a professional learning community among these school leaders where discourse, strategic thinking and mutual support are norms, from which we can learn together on a regular and ongoing basis.

Central office staff.

I spent time with each department of District 65's central office to understand how administrators and staff see their role in supporting children and education throughout the district. In order to provide the support they need to succeed, it was critical that I understand how things are structured, what gets done and how it gets done, and the priorities of the central office staff.

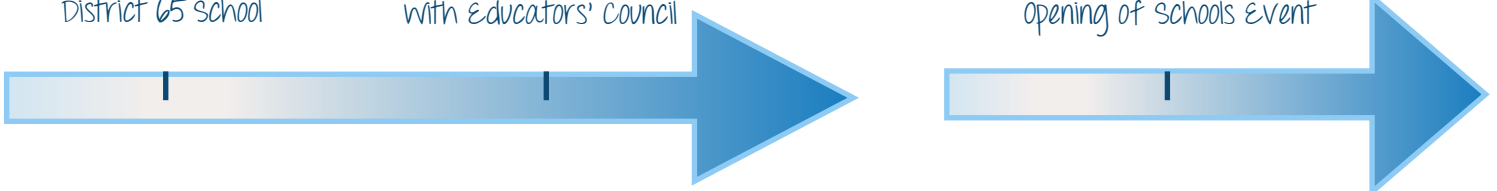
Board of Education.

In addition to the formal board meetings, I have begun meeting with each board member individually to understand their goals and perspectives and to keep them updated about what is happening in the district.

Visited each
District 65 School

Began Weekly Meetings
with Educators' Council

Welcomed D65 staff at the
Opening of Schools Event



Learn...

My initial efforts to talk and listen to members of the District 65 community resulted in a number of lessons learned. These insights and perspectives align well with my goals and guiding principles. I have begun to incorporate what I heard into plans for the district going forward.

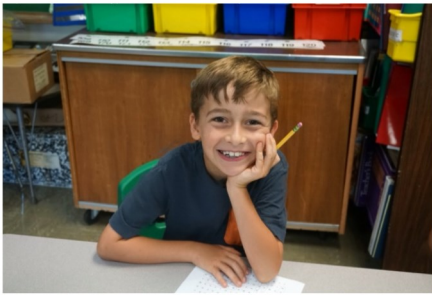
Support for educators.

Principals and teachers are passionate about what they do and about the success of District 65 – many are graduates of District 65 themselves. They care deeply about their students and welcome the challenging work required to support all students. As high-performing professionals, they understand the importance of effective professional development. They want to work with the district to ensure that they have career paths that allow them to grow as professionals and make full use of their skills and talents. This includes a commitment to develop appraisal systems that set high standards for performance.

Focus on teaching and learning.

Truly supporting and focusing on the teaching and learning that occurs in every classroom, for every child, came through in all of my conversations. Parents, educators, community members and partners are all concerned about academic rigor, gaps in achievement, equity and access, safety and social emotional learning. As a result, the strategic plan will develop strategies to address these issues. Additionally, many raised the current implementation of the Common Core State Standards and new assessments as key areas of concern.

“Through education anything is possible for every child.”



Central office structured to provide support.

District administrative staff care deeply about student success and want to do their part to support this important work. Over the summer, I filled several important vacancies and established key support structures (e.g. the principals began building a professional learning community, weekly meetings of senior district staff) to ensure that the central office is ultimately in a position to provide support for teaching and learning.

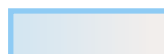
Communications and collaboration.

A consistent theme throughout my conversations has been the importance of transparent, open communications within and across in District 65 and the broader community. Meeting with and listening to the wide range of people in the district and broader community is just the beginning. Having an ongoing and open dialogue with all stakeholders – and establishing formal and informal mechanisms for these conversations to take place – is a high priority for me and critical to the success of teaching and learning in District 65.

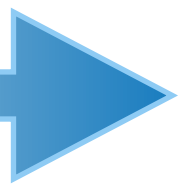
Leadership Team Greets Families on First Day of School



Meetings with Community Partners



Launched Strategic Planning Process



What Comes Next?



I am committed to continuing and expanding the dialogue begun in my first 100 days as superintendent to support the development of district goals and a plan of action.

We have begun a strategic planning process that will guide the development of action steps, management structures to support effective implementation and effective methods to monitor progress for the next three years.

And the themes of collaboration, listening and learning continue. The strategic planning process has already included opportunities for the community to provide feedback on the draft mission statement and an open nomination process to put together working committees. There are many additional opportunities to provide input where you can:

- ✓ Participate in a focus group – October-November 2014
- ✓ Reply to a survey – November 2014
- ✓ Attend a town hall meeting – January 2015
- ✓ Provide feedback on the draft plan – January 2015

For specific dates and times and to stay informed about the District 65 strategic plan, please visit www.district65.net.

And if you have ideas or feedback, please send an email to - input@district65.net.

Thanks in advance for joining with me to support the success of every child, every day, by whatever it takes!



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