

Superintendent's Entry Plan

John Magas
July 21, 2020

ISD
7099
Duluth
Public Schools



Duluth Public Schools are working to inspire every student to achieve their potential and preparing students to lead productive, fulfilling lives as citizens of Duluth and the wider world.

Dear Duluth Public Schools Community



I am deeply honored and humbled to serve as your superintendent and to be entrusted with the education of our students as well as the goals of our community and the Duluth School Board. Having grown up on the shores of Lake Superior, I feel like I've returned home.

I am excited to begin our journey together as the leader of our school district. Throughout the interview process and weeks of on-boarding, several things became clear. Duluth is committed to our schools. We have outstanding educators, leaders and staff, and our students and families are amazing. Through meetings with staff and Duluth citizens, I listened and learned about ISD709. It's clearly evident, through these conversations, that the education and well-being of our youth is a top priority. We all recognize that the seeds of educational greatness that we plant today will produce a bright future for our community.

We're experiencing incredible challenges and opportunities for growth for education as we work together to remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and strive to produce meaningful engagement for each learner. Recent events emphasize the need to identify and address systemic racism, the root cause of inequities for so many. We are at a crossroads where there is no room for error in planning and where turning a blind eye to injustice risks additional decades of progress in reducing opportunity gaps and achieving excellence for all. For me, education was an opportunity to be lifted from poverty and I feel a strong responsibility to ensure that it does the same for all whom I serve. I am deeply dedicated to this collective work.

Good intentions are no more than wishful thinking without careful planning and strategic action. I have outlined my initial work in the district with a structured 100 Day Entry Plan that will begin, pending board input, on July 22, 2020 and end on November 1, 2020. The activities are focused on both the immediate and long term needs of the district.

Knowing that there are uncertainties in the coming months that could cause us to modify these plans, I want to assure you that trusting relationships built upon authentic, inclusive listening are the cornerstone of my leadership. This will be central to my work in the Duluth Public Schools, not only during the next 100 days, but throughout the many years that I hope to serve you.

I'm grateful to the many people that have shared their thoughts and advice with me, and look forward to the many opportunities we will have to work together.

With sincerity and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Magas". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John Magas, Superintendent
Superintendents@isd709.org



My vision for this entry plan is focused on three critical structures sharply focused on supporting student learning in three areas:

- Alignment of district actions and resources to support and empower students, staff, and community
- Advancement of equity practices to ensure student success, safety, and well being
- Maximizing learning for each student, every day



ENTRY PLAN

A significant focus of my first 100 days is centered on listening deeply to learn about our district and community. I seek to understand diverse perspectives on our strengths and areas for growth. My goal is to develop an initial plan for how we can best serve the students of the Duluth Public Schools, as well as to inform next steps for deeper strategic planning later this year.

My entry plan consists of three phases:

- **Phase 1** began months prior to my start. It has focused on initial relationship building, listening, and learning.
- **Phase 2** continues with relationship building, listening, and learning with our students, families, staff, and community. It also focuses on strategic actions to support academic excellence, equity, cohesive leadership teams, and systems of continuous improvement for greater student success.
- **Phase 3** continues many of our 100 Day Plan strategic actions. It also focuses on a collective review of data from the first two phases and through additional sources. This information will be used to begin developing a five-year strategic plan in collaboration with the board and community stakeholders that will define our collective goals for the District.



PHASE 1 ACTIVITIES COMPLETED



Transition focused on relationship building and learning through:

- One-on-one meetings with central office administrators, principals, all school board members and student representatives
- Meetings with various stakeholders such as the Duluth Federation of Teachers president and other bargaining group members, community partners, officials of cities within our district, and a wide variety of other community members, staff, and higher education partners
- Engagement in an initial analysis of student achievement and climate data
- Review of financial data including an overview of the district budget, and attendance in a class on Minnesota finance and levies
- Facilitation of a needs analysis and hiring processes for key leadership positions
- Leadership in the development of our fall Return to Learning plans

I am deeply indebted to the phenomenal administrative team, staff, students, board and community members that supported my learning and planning.

PHASE 2 ACTIVITIES



Will focus on listening and learning applied to actions in the following areas:

Academic Excellence

The primary function of schools is to maximize learning for each student. With the recent Covid closures never has this purpose been more clear.

- Develop leadership planning teams to construct feasible and engaging learning plans to safely reopen schools in the fall of 2020 for in-person, hybrid, and enhanced distance learning models
- Create a plan for professional learning for the upcoming year that aligns with the delivery models

Setting a high bar of achievement, removing barriers to success, and modeling that we are all life-long learners are critical to creating a culture of academic excellence.

- Support Monitoring and Evaluation and Curriculum and Instruction teams in the development of recommendations for a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Begin development of a long-term professional development plan that prioritizes student learning and student well-being, including a system for support and accountability

PHASE 2 ACTIVITIES *continued*

Equity

Educational equity has been the driving force throughout my entire career. Finding systemic ways of increasing our capacity to meet each students' learning and social emotional needs and courageously challenging and changing structures that demand improvement is vital to the success of the district and community.

- Review the Implementation and Accountability Plan for the existing Education Equity Framework and consider next steps for revision and implementation
- Complete an analysis of district policies, procedures and practices and use the results to create a prioritized revision plan utilizing the Equity Framework and resources such as the Tool for Equity Accountability
- Conduct a review of district behavioral practices and plans to ensure the ongoing implementation of current best practices in all Duluth Public Schools
- Launch dialog sessions with high school student groups to discuss issues of equity, race, and power

Cohesive Leadership Teams

Cohesive, aligned leadership teams are essential to district success. A great board provides support, focused feedback and clarity of direction through proper governance for great district leaders. Great district leaders support and improve great principals. Great principals support and improve great teachers. Great teachers support and improve the efforts of our outstanding students.

- Improve practices of hiring and consider next steps for improving onboarding of new leaders at all levels
- Propose, plan and participate in a board retreat focused on governance, process/communication protocols, superintendent goal setting and evaluation, as well as planning for ongoing next steps
- Conduct a district self assessment of supports for instructional leadership and prioritize steps to implement a principal support framework
- Align district leadership entry plan efforts through a cabinet professional book study on 100 Day Leadership by Reeves and Eaker

Continuous Improvement

The constant drive to do better or create better outcomes impacts nearly every decision. We will utilize tools for root cause analysis, plan/do/study/act cycles of inquiry, and best practices of implementation and monitoring, all of which will increase our understanding and ability to adapt.

- Review current student achievement and behavior data as well as previous continuous improvement plans to identify interim measures of success for our schools and district for the 2020-21 school year
- Conduct an initiative audit as well as begin exploration of improvement science based processes for implementation and monitoring
- Investigate initial steps for strategic, fiscally responsible allocation of limited resources within the budgeting process
- Re-examine previous boundaries and study efforts with the board and discuss potential next steps
- Explore options for strategic planning to begin in late fall or winter of the 2020-21 school year that include broad stakeholder input

PHASE 3 ACTIVITIES

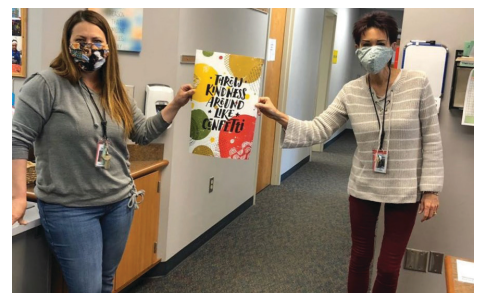


Planning for our ongoing long-term work. Create a study and steering team including school and central office leaders and other stakeholders. This team will analyze lessons learned in Phase 2 to inform next steps to:

- Engage the district in the development of a five-year strategic plan to begin in 2021-22
- Align organizational structures and resources to strategic priorities identified within the strategic plan through the clarification of structure, roles, and responsibilities

Conclusion

Thank you for your commitment and flexibility as we engage in this plan for our District. In normal transition circumstances, this would be an ambitious plan. Given the current realities with COVID-19 and the health and financial implications of this crisis, we may need to adjust as we prioritize student and staff safety and learning needs. I believe it is vital that I am clear and transparent about my plans, but I also believe deeply in community feedback and collective responsibility. If we do make modifications, I will communicate any changes that may arise. We will continue to move forward as our students, families, staff, and community are depending on us. I am excited to begin our journey together!





**Independent School District 709
Duluth Public Schools**

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