According to Michael Watkins (2013), “…transitions into new roles are the most challenging times in the professional lives of leaders.” It has been my experience that this is also a challenging time in the professional lives of all members of the organization. However, my entry plan will be an effective and meaningful way for me to begin the process of reacquainting myself with, and becoming immersed in the culture of the Hauppauge Public Schools and community, while at the same time assuring the transition is smooth for all those within the Hauppauge community.

This entry plan will serve several purposes. The first is to begin to cultivate an effective and synergistic relationship with the Board of Education and other key members of the leadership team. By following this plan I will be able to develop a deeper understanding of the issues, conflicts, financial challenges, personnel issues, open projects and initiatives of the Hauppauge School District. In addition, this entry plan will help identify common themes, beliefs, values and successes of the school district and community.

Ultimately, the data and information gathered throughout the process will enable me to “hit the ground LEARNING” and pour the foundation for short-term and long-term goals for a collectively developed theory of action\(^1\) and a five-year plan.

\(^1\) A Theory of Action is a set of underlying assumptions about how an organization will move from its current state to its desired future.

“The starting point of all achievement is desire.”

—Napoleon Hill
ENTRY PLAN PHASES

PHASE I
Pre-Entry
May - June 30

PHASE II
Entry
July 1 - Sept. 30

PHASE III
Post-Entry
Oct. 1 - Nov. 30

ENTRY PLAN GOALS

Rekindle
Existing/Build
New Relationships

Understand
District Documents

Identify
Strengths, Challenges, & Opportunities

Develop Preliminary Goals
“Happiness does not come from doing easy work but from the afterglow of satisfaction that comes after the achievement of a difficult task that demanded our best.”

- Theodore Isaac Rubin

Pre-Entry

This phase will allow me to establish a presence in Hauppauge prior to serving as the Superintendent of Schools. I will make arrangements to visit the District during school or evening hours, so that I may gain a greater understanding of District operations and procedures. A major goal of this phase is to re-establish contact with the District, its community, and leaders and to build a foundation for productive long-term relationships.

Entry

My goal during this phase is to once again become a true member of the Hauppauge community by being highly visible both inside and outside of the District. During this phase, I will be engaged in a listening and learning tour - meeting individually with stakeholders and small/large groups to hear perspectives, concerns and hopes. This information, in addition to District documents, will assist me in identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Lastly, this data will help to inform the development of preliminary goals.

Post-Entry

During this phase, my goal will be to continue to nurture a cohesive leadership team and prepare for the future. Emphasis will be on compiling and analyzing the findings from the listening and learning tour and reviewing District documents so that strengths, challenges and opportunities will be identified. These findings will form the basis of preliminary goals.
SUPERINTENDENT ENTRY PLAN

Understanding that it typically takes a new leader 90 days to begin to gain traction (Watkins, 2013) I will begin, in a series of steps, to implement my entry plan immediately following my appointment as Superintendent of Schools. I will accelerate my learning by conducting interviews, becoming a participant observer, participating in forums and leading informal focus groups. I will collect data and conduct an analysis of these data. The data I collect will relate to all aspects of the Hauppauge Public Schools and community, including but not limited to student achievement data and financial audit reports, as well as other relevant documents.

These data will also serve as the basis for discussion and interviews with key personnel and constituents, as well as identifying and prioritizing Board of Education goals. The information I will seek may include but not be limited to the following:

- Contracts and collective bargaining agreements
- Current proposals for all open collective bargaining agreements
- All recent reports
- School improvement plans
- School Board meeting minutes
- Six months of previous Board packets
- Budget for current year and prior years
- Budget projections for 2016-2017 and the next five years
- Financial and organizational audits including last five internal and external audits
- Local news coverage
- Student achievement data from the state and other sources, and those generated internally
- Responses to Community Superintendent Search Survey
- Survey – discuss with the Board of Education the possible benefits of a community survey
- Table of Organization and job descriptions
- Policies, written practices and systems related to all functions in the district (including BOE Policy Manual)
- Grants and funding sources
- Technology, both instructional and administrative
- Reports and projects related to facilities
“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.”

Benjamin Franklin

The best source for recognizing and understanding the beliefs, values, sources of pride, politics, needs, strengths and weaknesses of the Hauppauge Public Schools is the people of its community. Simply asking people about the District, its direction, its past and its future will provide a wealth of information and provide valuable insight. Questions and discussions will focus on bringing this kind of critical information to the surface. These discussions will not be one-way conversations. I will use them to display my desire to learn and understand, which will enable me to build credibility with my new team and in the community. In fact, multi-directional learning will be the primary focus of my first thirty days. I plan to offer candid self-disclosure to those I interact with as well as to learn from them. The following is a list from whom I will collect information, meet and interview. It will be important to seek information and perspective from the following:

- Individual School Board Trustees
- Mr. Lederer, Interim Superintendent of Schools
- Dr. Murphy, Mr. Stucchio and Mr. Tasman
- District Directors
- Building Administrators
- Teachers
- Student representatives
- Department Heads of operational programs
- Internal and External Auditors
- The Hauppauge Industrial Association (HIA)
- Audit Committee members
- Treasurer, Purchasing Agent, Internal Claims Auditor, District Clerk
- PTA leaders and members
- Union Presidents
- Representatives from all employee groups
- Site visits to all schools and buildings including classroom visits to every teacher in the District within the first sixty days of the school year
- Political representatives and leaders (town, county and state levels)
- Leaders from community organizations
- District coaches
- Coaches of community athletic groups
- Editors from local media
- The District’s attorney
Before meeting with those from the list above, I will make it clear that my first thirty days will be spent on a listening and learning tour, and that I have resolved myself to neither recommending nor making any changes during this time period, thus enabling me to both focus on and accelerate my learning. While meeting I will ask essentially the same eleven questions:

1. Of what are you most proud in our district?
2. What are your challenges?
3. What are the biggest challenges we are facing right now? What challenges do you believe we will face in the future?
4. Why are we facing these challenges, or why are we going to face them in the future?
5. What efforts have been made to address these challenges?
6. What do you see as the most promising opportunities for growth or improvement?
7. What would need to happen for us to harness the potential of these opportunities?
8. To what do you aspire for our students, your school and our district? To what do you aspire in your personal and professional lives (What are your short-term and long-term goals)?
9. What else do you want me to know about our district?
10. What would you like to know about me?
11. What would you like me to know about you?
“Optimism is essential to achievement and it is also the foundation of courage and true progress.”

-Nicholas M. Butler

Effective learning such as this will give me the foundational insights necessary to build credibility and work successfully with the Board of Education, District leaders, building administrators, faculty, staff and the community to build a long-term improvement plan. Careful listening coupled with appropriate follow-up will yield powerful insights.

In this stage of entry, transparency will be crucial. I will make public my entry plan and my schedule for meeting with various stakeholders.

According to Barry Jentz (2005), …declaring a “no-changes” period that can last anywhere from one to six months accomplishes several things: it signals to stakeholders that everyone will have their say and thus it won’t pay to fight for early access, it helps you avoid the jump reflex problem solving, it gives you time to build initial trust by fulfilling your commitment to learn about the place, and it forces you to articulate your proposed changes within the context of others’ views, thereby lessening the chance that your ideas will be dismissed for coming “out of the blue” or being solely based on your prior experience in other, different environments.
Up to this point, I have outlined a solid plan for meeting key players in and around the Hauppauge School District. However, there will be a need for me to introduce myself to a much wider array of people. I will create numerous opportunities for all teachers, staff and community members to meet me, get to know me, and feel secure with me as the leader of the Hauppauge Public Schools. To this end I will:

- Schedule paired walk-throughs (classroom visits) with principals and directors
- Participate in the creation and production of short video updates to be posted on the District website that share pertinent information, announce upcoming events and highlight recent accomplishments
- Schedule open office hours and “Coffee with the Superintendent” at which parents, employees, community members, representatives of the HIA, merchants and others are welcome to visit, ask questions, share insights and propose ideas
- Visit PTA meetings for all schools
- Attend student performances both during school and in evenings
- Attend sporting events
- Visit rehearsals of performing groups and musicals
- Participate in school and community fundraisers and events
- Join students for lunch and informal conversation in the cafeterias
- Join teachers in the faculty rooms for lunch and friendly conversation
- Spend time shadowing and working with custodians, buildings and grounds and secretarial units
- Visit religious organizations and community centers
- Visit volunteer fire departments
- Make connections with leaders of local Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts
- Introduce myself to leaders of the Hauppauge Youth Organization (HYO)
- Invite realtor groups in for lunch to discuss the strengths of the Hauppauge School District and what we are able to provide our students
- Participate in community organizations such as HIA, Rotary and the Smithtown Youth Bureau
Upon entry to the district I will share this plan with the Board of Education, central office administrators, directors, principals and assistant principals seeking their feedback before commencing.

**ANALYSIS & COMMUNICATION**

During the process I will provide updates to the Board of Education on my progress and any pertinent information that may require immediate attention. Following the collection, analysis and organization of the information, I will make a culminating presentation to the Board of Education. I will engage the Board in discussion around the themes and trends that emerge. At this time I would expect that the Board and I would discuss vision, resources, gaps in student achievement and a plan for how to communicate what was learned during the entry period. The data from the entry plan should provide appropriate justification for proposed changes, but also validation for what we should not change in the District. It will be important, when communicating the results of my entry plan, to include practices and programs that have been and continue to be effective.

Within my first year as Superintendent of Schools in the Hauppauge School District, the results of this entry plan should be used to develop a theory of action and a five-year plan that will generate documents for identifying and establishing an appropriate improvement agenda for our District. I would recommend the structure of the five-year plan follow the American Association for School Administrators professional standards for school superintendents:

1. Leadership and District Culture
2. Policy and Governance
3. Communications and Community Relations
4. Organizational Management
5. Curriculum Planning and Development
6. Instructional Management

“The roots of true achievement lie in the will to become the best that you can become.”

-Harold Taylor
The documents we develop should serve as a source of discussion and an opportunity to collaboratively and collectively establish goals and a rationale for improving all aspects of our school district for the purpose of providing an exceptional educational program within the context of fiscal responsibility.

**STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

The plan detailed above describes much of the strategy I would use to identify strengths and weaknesses of the Hauppauge Public Schools. However, according to Watkins (2013), “…an inescapable reality of promotion is that you attract much more attention and a higher level of scrutiny than before.” I plan to lead a Hauppauge School District that is truly a community of learners. This will require me to lead by example, which is why my first thirty days, as I mentioned earlier, will be focused on learning. To model the behavior I will expect in others I will incorporate the distinct phases suggested by Watkins (2013) which include: learning, designing necessary changes or enhancements, building support, implementing the changes, and, observing results.

This type of cycle is important because I recognize the fact that people will not only be watching what I do, but they will also be watching how I do it (Watkins, 2013). Taking time to learn, building personal credibility and creating momentum will be vitally important at this stage.
CONCLUDING STATEMENT

I trust I have provided the Board with an effective entry plan and tangible evidence of what I have learned about the Hauppauge School District, as well as what I have to offer as a leader. I am firm in my belief that leadership and learning are indispensable to each other and that leadership is not a position; it is an action. I am certain I will form a synergy with the Board of Education, central office administrators, building and departmental leaders, faculty, staff, students and the community that will enable us to not only keep the Hauppauge Public Schools and community strong, but also bring our Schools to a status that is among the finest in the nation.

REFERENCES
