



Entry Plan

In a document provided to the school board in June, I outlined the rationale for developing and completing an entry plan. The plan was designed to provide the new superintendent with a strong understanding of the Portsmouth Schools. In general terms, the rationale was five-fold:

1. Systematic process for self-immersion into the Portsmouth School district and the Portsmouth community
2. Conducting interviews and gathering data would allow the superintendent to model collaborative behavior
3. Allows for recording and charting of responsibilities / expectations of the new superintendent
4. Sets the stage for reinforcing the organization’s planning process
5. A vehicle for the new superintendent to get to know the organization and for the organization and community to get to know the new superintendent

Key Outcomes

The plan outlined meetings to collect data from the following groups.

- School Board Members
- Administrators / Central Office Staff
- Teachers and Support Staff
- Parents and Community Members
- Union Leaders
- Business and elected officials

I interviewed over seventy (70) folks individually, spent a day at each of the schools interviewing small groups of teachers, attended PTO meetings, surveyed parents and interviewed the student council at the high school. These conversations with key stakeholders provided a comprehensive picture of what members of the Portsmouth School District believe to be:

- the strengths and accomplishments of the district
- the key priorities and challenges facing the district
- expectations for the Superintendent of Schools

I am grateful to the school board for supporting this process as it has facilitated my entry into the District. It has been a rewarding and invaluable experience for me to learn about the proud tradition of the Portsmouth Schools. I wish to thank all who participated in the process.

Organization of Report

To be sure, the entry process has resulted in an incredible amount of information. I have stated to all groups that while the process is of more value to me than any product, I did promise a report back to the board on the feedback collected during my transition. This report is organized in three broad categories.

First, the report captures general feedback regarding strengths and priorities identified by the groups. Second, the report will attempt to organize this material into major findings and recommendations using the following broad categories:



- Policy and Governance
- Business Operations, Human Resources, Transportation, Facilities Maintenance and Food Services
- Budget, Finance and School Funding
- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Student Academic Performance
- Special Education
- Technology
- Safety and Security
- Leadership, Management and Supervision of Staff
- Communication & Parent/Community Relations

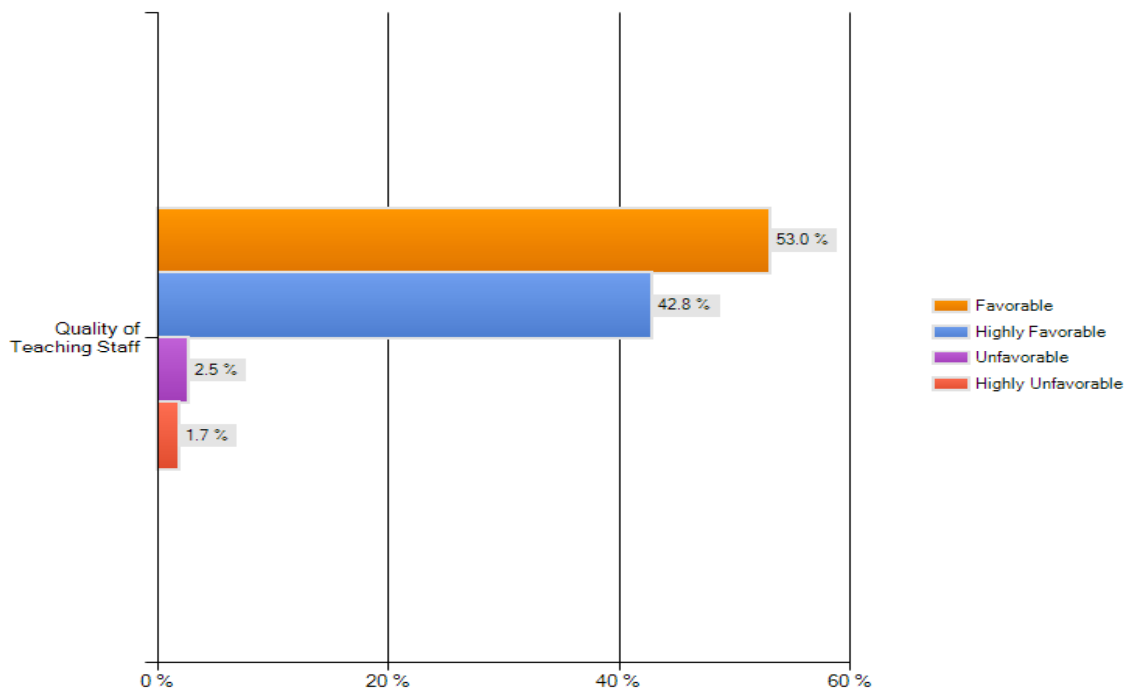
Third, a collection of data generated through this process is included; most notably, expectations for the new superintendent, those cultural norms that are perceived as strongest in the district and what norms may need attention. Finally, parent/guardian survey data is provided.

Part I

Strengths of the District

General Feedback

Regardless of the group interviewed, three consistent themes emerged. One, **respondents believe that the quality and dedication of the school staff is its strength.** Words and phrases used to describe teachers, administrators and support staff include “committed”, “highly respected”, “will do anything to help a student”, “open to new ideas”, “outstanding”, “great camaraderie”, “progressive”, “kids come first”, “focused on the whole child”, “folks go above and beyond”, “high degree of professionalism” and “phenomenal” is just a small sampling of the words used to describe the staff. When the 380 families who responded to the survey were asked to rate the quality of the teaching staff 43% responded “highly favorable” and 53% favorable.

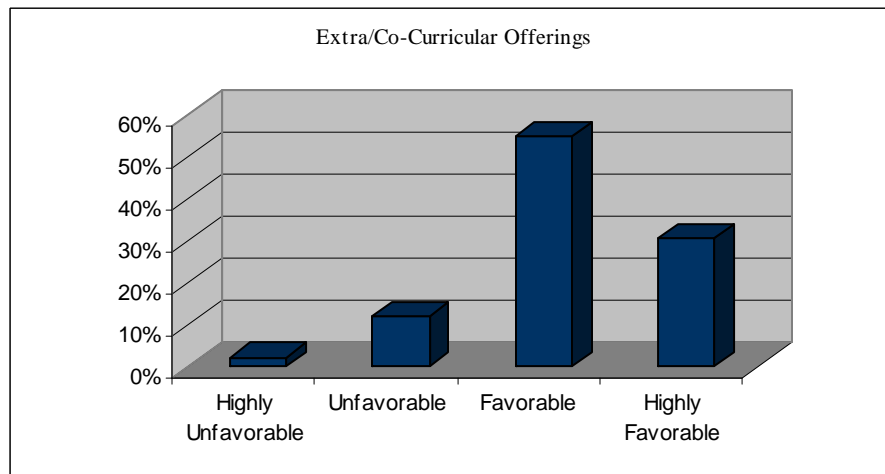
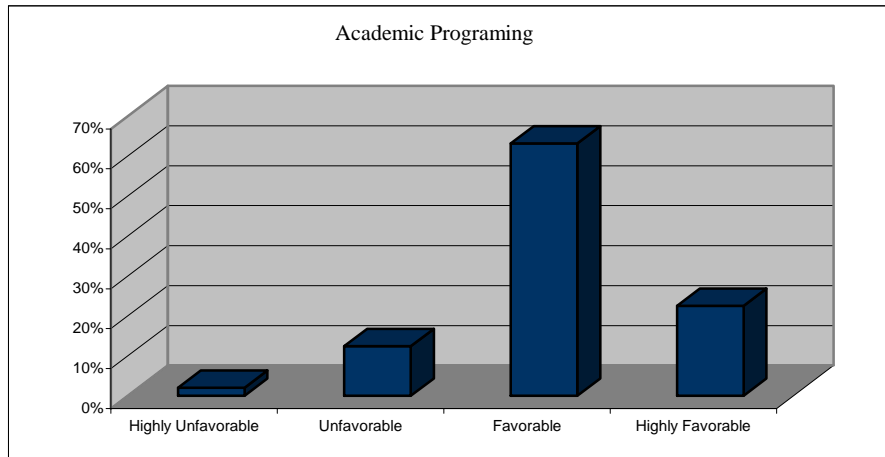




The second clear strength that emerged is the *wide range of programming available to students*. One school board member noted that between “*CTE, music, sports, and art, there is always a reason to come to school, something for everyone.*” Various community members repeatedly cited the programs or attributes listed below:

- All day kindergarten
- Robert Lister Academy (alternative program)
- PEEP program
- SPED, Options, KIDS,
- K-12 music program
- Emphasis on whole child
- Strong athletic offerings and merger of city recreation and school athletics
- K-12 arts program
- Career & Technical offerings
- Advanced placement courses
- High levels of extra and co-curricular participation
- Futures program

When parents were asked to rate the quality of programming in the district 63% rate it as favorable and 22% highly favorable. When asked about extra and co-curricular offerings, 55% rated these favorably and 31% see these offerings as highly favorable.





The third strength identified by a large majority of respondents is the ***strong support and pride in the community for the school district***. Many respondents talked about their personal belief in public education and “unusually strong support for the Portsmouth Schools.”

A local state representative noted that despite little state support, locally there is “good, strong support for education in Portsmouth.” Many noted the changing demographics, specifically; that only 17% of households have school aged children. However, despite this change, a large number of participants spoke proudly that public education is “valued,” “a top priority,” and the “focal point” for the community. A member of the city council expressed a personal desire widely shared by many to see Portsmouth schools recognized as the best in New Hampshire, in New England and in the country. In short, “people believe in the strength of the system.”

Priorities / Challenges

General Feedback

When asked to talk about the priorities and issues facing the district, there was much more variability. To be sure, as folks were interviewed over the course of five (5) months, some priorities, such as the need to bond the renovations at the middle school, have been resolved. Other issues remain. However, challenges identified most frequently are as follows:

- Redistricting at the Elementary Schools
- Addressing Facilities Needs at the (3) elementary schools
- Establishing a Supervision & Evaluation System
- Upgrading technology; integrating technology into classroom and student use.
- Addressing athletic fields / gym needs
- Improving relations between City Council and School Board
- Demonstrating increased student achievement
- Maintaining appropriate class sizes
- Attending to the needs of underserved children
- Addressing the loss of Title I services at Little Harbour
- Convincing the community we are good guardians of public funds.
- Restoring lost programs (elementary foreign language)
- Responding to changing demographics of the community
- Improving communication
- Strengthening community relationships
- Funding
- Sustaining relationship with SAU # 50
- Providing more time to staff for better vertical / horizontal curriculum alignment
- Focusing district initiatives



Part II

Major Findings and Recommendations*Policy and Governance*

1. The Portsmouth School Board has expressed a willingness to articulate the essential personal and professional characteristics it seeks in its members and established an operating protocol that evidences open, direct, honest and respectful communication among members. The School Board has exhibited an understanding and appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the Superintendent and central office administration.
2. The Portsmouth School Board authorized a legal review by the New Hampshire School Board's Association of its policy manual. This review revealed the need to fine tune a number of policies and adopt a number of polices, required by law, which do not exist. The Portsmouth School Board's Policy Committee has established a monthly work plan to update the policy manual
3. The Portsmouth School Board has undertaken a considerable amount of work ranging from moving the middle school renovation project forward to budget review to conducting a superintendent search over the past year. There are considerable issues which need to be addressed and will require the board to make use of standing committee's to provide focus and accountability in these critical areas. Many respondents expressed a desire to see business meetings run more efficiently.
4. The School Board will initiate three additional standing committees, specifically, (1) Facilities, (2) Technology and (3) Extra-Curricular in addition to (4) Policy as a means to focus some of the critical work ahead, to review important elements and to provide recommendations to the full school board.
5. The District enjoys a positive relationship with SAU 50 and its Superintendent of Schools. Quarterly advisory meetings are conducted to ensure open communication. The high school principal and SAU 50 Superintendent communicate regularly to ensure coordination.

Maintain annual retreat to revisit norms and protocols to ensure a high functioning board focused on student achievement.

Continue to update the policy manual and substantially complete the work by June 2010. The policy sub-committee should stay apprised of model policies from NHSBA emanating from federal and state statutes. Continue to meet regularly to ensure the policy manual remains up to date.

The School Board has published a list of annual goals for the 2009-10 school year. In the spring of 2010, it should review actions, timeframes and unfinished goals and should consider developing a long-range (5-year) work plan for school improvement to address newly identified needs.

Business Operations, Human Resources, Transportation, Facilities Maintenance and Food Services.

6. Central office personnel are extremely knowledgeable about their job functions and carry out their duties with a high degree of professionalism. Roughly one-half of staff has been long



standing employees of the district and others have been in the district three years or less. Nonetheless, there is a clear division of duties. Staff has been cross-trained to undertake key tasks.

7. There is no single person dedicated to human resources management and the ever-increasing demands. The city has an HR director who is consulted on issues, but day-to-day responsibilities are shared among a number of folks. The district does not have an employee handbook or training programs to limit organizational liability, i.e., sexual harassment, CPR, First Aid, Visual Display Terminals, etc.
8. The administrative assistant to the Superintendent provides great support to both the Superintendent and School Board.
9. Working with the guidance of the School Board, the business administrator has worked to make improvements in finance and budget operations over the past three years. The business administrator has established good relations with the city's finance personnel. The business administrator reports out monthly using a recently developed budget report. He works closely with the Maintenance Director and serves as the liaison to the bus contractor. His appointment and expertise on behalf of the newly formed Joint Building Committee to oversee the middle school project will take considerable time and he will serve a critical role.
10. The maintenance director has undertaken a number of steps to realize energy efficiency in the district. The director has oversight of maintenance personnel but does not have oversight of the custodians. Principals often call upon the director to help alleviate issues caused by absenteeism and to address issues of general cleanliness in buildings. The director works hard to address issues and is highly dedicated to the district; the lack of coordination has caused some misunderstanding over the years.
11. The City of Portsmouth has a five year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) where the school board may update its requests each year. While the district just received 37.5 million dollar bond to renovate the middle school, more typically, every two years the school district submits requests totaling \$500,000. The district is seeking \$25,000 in the FY 2011 plan to conduct a thorough facilities needs assessment at all three elementary schools.
12. District-wide Safety and Wellness Committee's have not been fully implemented. New Franklin operates a high functioning safety committee and Little Harbour enjoys a strong wellness committee.
13. The food service program is operated as an enterprise fund and the director works to provide high levels of participation with little contribution from the district. While there have been questions raised about the variety and quality of the school lunches, the program is run cost effectively in compliance with the National School Lunch Program.
14. The district's financial reporting software is tied in with the city's finance requirements. While the district does use the model "chart of accounts," the software is limited in its reporting capabilities.

The District should continue to explore ways to improve coordination between custodians and maintenance in order to create clearer lines of responsibility and accountability. There is a need



to improve the daily cleanliness of buildings, particularly Little Harbour. Building principals, if they are to better monitor instruction, need to be freed from these day-to-day demands.

The District should consider an external review of central office roles and responsibilities and in particular evaluate the district's human resources capacity and effectiveness.

The District should implement an evaluation of the food service program in conjunction with the state's review cycle to be better informed about the school lunch program so that it understands the strengths, internal limits and explore opportunities to improve participation and customer satisfaction. The formation of a District Wellness Committee should pay particular attention to improving nutrition education of offerings for all students.

Budget, Finance and School Funding

15. The most recent school budgets have resulted in diminished purchasing power. Last year, despite a "zero-based budget," the school board and administration were able sustain all programs and retain all professional staff. However, in areas such as technology equipment, flat funding has had a negative impact.
16. Many respondents applauded the community's strong support for and unwavering belief in public education. The schools are a great source of civic pride and receive strong taxpayer support. Community members noted the changing demographics in Portsmouth where 17% of households have children in the schools.
17. The school district's budget process has been a source of frustration for all stakeholder groups. The school board has set out to identify quality educational metrics and align these with budget priorities.
18. The short term stimulus funds notwithstanding, Portsmouth sees the lion's share of its education funding come from local property tax, yet federal and state mandates continue to require programs and requirements that cost more money. Last year, the NH legislature, shifted over \$100,000 in retirement costs to the district. Next year, the district will lose over \$200,000 in state support.
19. The District has undergone fluctuations in elementary school populations and in 2001 the district reorganized attendance sectors. In short, two of the district's K-5 buildings, Little Harbour and New Franklin, will see enrollments at full capacity in the short term, and two buildings, Little Harbour and Dondero, are in need of significant capital renewal.

The District needs to establish and annually update a five-year plan that addresses all major aspects of the school district including, but not limited to: School Programs, Curriculum, Instruction, Facilities Improvements and Technology and seek to develop budgets aligned to the plan.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

20. Under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent, the district has a curriculum revision process and timeline underway. Much good work has been completed asking, "What are the common essential standards, or power standards, we want our students to learn at each grade level or in



each course?” The work has shifted to identifying what assessments have we developed that let us know when they have learned it.

21. The district has committed to a process and model known as Professional Learning Communities (PLC).
22. The New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) is the only standardized achievement measure utilized in the district. At the elementary school level, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is used to inform student instruction.
23. Common assessments as distinguished from common formative assessments are not yet well understood. Neither practice is at scale within the district. Common assessments, those administered at course or unit end to all students to determine if students have met key benchmarks, exist in pockets. Formative assessments, those given more frequently to check in and monitor student progress towards benchmarks, are more widely used.
24. The district has exceptional resources allocated to reading at each of the schools.
25. The district has opted to use federal stimulus funds under America’s Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to focus on improving math performance by providing additional student support and enhancing teacher practice. The district has hired interventionists who provide additional instructional support to students as well as math coaches who work with staff to improve content knowledge and pedagogy for all math teachers.
26. Teachers in the district have high marks for the end of year literacy and writing institutes designed by the district. Teachers have expressed a desire for more professional development time dedicated to follow-up on these events particularly opportunities for more vertical and horizontal integration.
27. High school students expressed general satisfaction with the block schedule though some parents and staff expressed concerns. Students did encourage staff use a variety of instructional strategies during the ninety-minute time frame. Students expressed an interest in pursuing a slightly later start to the school day (30-45 minutes).
28. The reduction of world languages in the 4th grade a few years ago has resulted in a desire to re-institute programming at the elementary school level. Today, beginning in grade 6, students are able to take advantage of rich programming in modern and classical languages through grade 12.
29. The school board has made reasonable class size a priority over the years. While regular education paraprofessional support has diminished over the years, efforts to keep elementary school class sizes at 18:1 across the three elementary schools have been appreciated.
30. Professional development has been a strong component in the district. In fact, most people take pride in the notion that Portsmouth is always at the “cutting edge” and “highly progressive” when it comes to best practice. While the use of delayed starts have met with mixed reviews, staff note that the time dedicated to fully implement Professional Learning Communities is a positive element in the system.
31. All stakeholder groups hail Professional Learning Communities, as a model for increasing student achievement through teacher collaboration and goal setting, as a positive step.



32. The most recent budget saw an adjusted loss of \$67,000 for professional development. The number of out-of-district workshops, seminars and conferences has been reduced; however, the Assistant Superintendent and Title I Director have not only provided grant funds to sustain key initiative, they have developed in-house professional development aligned to the district's theory for systemic improvement.
33. All in the school community speak well of the knowledge and skills the Assistant Superintendent have provided the district. The Assistant Superintendent coordinates curriculum, facilitates the curriculum council and plans professional development. The district is re-working its five-year professional development plan as required by the State of New Hampshire.
34. Paraprofessional staff has expressed a clear desire for more professional development programming.
35. Staff expressed a desire to see the district become more focused with initiatives. Many are unclear of the direction and do not see the connectedness of district initiatives.

The reading program along with the Title I program should be coordinated under a district-wide reading director. The District should consider an ambitious literacy initiative that follows all children closely and ensures every child is reading at grade level by the end of 1st grade and is commensurate with reading support resource.

The District must persist in its Professional Learning Communities work and monitor student achievement goals established and addressed by teacher teams.

The District should explore ways to provide enrichment programming for students, especially in areas of world languages, math, science and language arts opportunities at the K-5 level.

Interventions blocks and strategies should be implemented at all buildings and each school should develop a school improvement plan to ensure all children are making progress toward benchmarks.

The district should schedule professional development time to sustain the positive work that has taken place with both vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment and sustain the well-received year end institute work.

As funding levels improve, the district should seek to restore professional development funding, but use the funds to provide staff opportunities aligned with the district's strategic goals in curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The district has begun to be more deliberate in articulating the connection between the various elements of a professional learning community. As this is the key leverage point for increasing student achievement, the district should seek alignment between this theory for increased students achievement and professional development activities.

Student Academic Performance

36. The district has few common measures of student achievement in place other than the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).



37. Many respondents have expressed concerns about the perception that student performance is good but they believe should be better, particularly in light of the level of per pupil investment.
38. The district has embraced New Hampshire's "follow the child" initiative and has taken steps to become more purposeful in using student data. There is an inherent tension with providing multiple measures of student performance and the concern over too much testing; there is a desire to connect the district's efforts with measures in order to show growth over time balanced against not losing sight of those measures that more difficult to measure such as safety, well-being, aspirations, extracurricular performance and alike.

The school district should continue to work on establishing a quality education metrics so that it can communicate performance measures to the community at large and should include multiple measures of student achievement data.

Portsmouth should rank in the top 5% of school districts in the State as measured by NECAP.

The district should investigate efficient ways to collect longitudinal data at both grade level and individual student levels.

Special Education

39. Most community members speak proudly about the alternative program at the Robert J. Lister Academy as well as the fully integrated four-year old program known as PEEP that runs at the Community Campus.
40. The School Board formed a task force in 2008 to build shared knowledge of special education programs, challenges, opportunities and costs.
41. Over the years the district initiated a number of programs that served students throughout the region and served as a rich funding source for the district. Recently, many districts have sought to offer programming in-house and the district is still adjusting to the loss of revenue.
42. The advent of a new Special Education Director provides the district an opportunity to look at current programs and service models with a new set of eyes to determine if the district is operating efficiently and effectively.
43. The needs of special education students have caused the district to re-allocate a number of regular education paraprofessionals to support these children.
44. The administrative assistant does a thorough job of tracking all out of district placements, internal logs and eligibility for Medicaid reimbursement.

The District should continue to support and develop in-district programs that serve the special needs of children. To ensure sustainability, the district should conduct on-going program review to monitor effectiveness and efficiency of the many programs such as KIDS, OPTIONS, OUTREACH, ASD PROGRAM, PEEP, LISTER ACADEMY and TRANSITIONS.



Technology

45. The School Board and Technology Director have developed a strong technology vision. The School Board's plan to create a standing committee for technology should be helpful in prioritizing a long-range plan to realize 21st Century classrooms that enhances student learning.
46. Both teacher teams and parent groups have sought funding sources to enhance technology in classrooms. This fall the district has submitted a competitive grant for stimulus dollars to improve technology at Portsmouth Middle School.
47. Bandwidth has been increased thereby improving Internet speed at each of the schools this year.
48. Last year, the district anticipated using only e-rate money for technology purchases. While the district's technology plan called for the replacement of all labs and all desktop units for teachers at Portsmouth High School, last year's budget did not provide a commitment from the general fund to the replacement cycle. Next year, equipment at the high school will be six year's old, beyond the warranty cycle, and where the newly renovated high school once enjoyed the most updated resources is in jeopardy of falling behind.
49. The district's newly purchased student information system software, Infinite Campus, has provided more interoperability. The middle school and high school are taking steps to more fully utilize the modules, most notably, the parent portal.
50. The district has been able to respond to the increasing data demands of the New Hampshire Department of Education (i4see). Two technicians assist central office and school level administrators in staying current with all reporting deadlines.

The District should consider the use of an external reviewer to examine the District's technology infrastructure and to ensure it meets industry best practice.

The district must find a way to support the purchase of new technology and replacement or runs the risk of falling significantly behind; any lease-purchase agreement should not extend beyond three (3) years.

As the district transitions to one where technology is fully integrated in content areas, the curriculum committee should identify the guaranteed curriculum aligned to ISTE standards all children are expected to know and be able to do. The advent of a technology standing committee should provide the impetus to review those elements of the technology plan that have been neglected and develop a long-range plan in line with the vision.

Safety and Security

51. Each of the buildings has an emergency plan. A district level committee has lapsed in recent years.
52. The loss of a School Resource Officer at the elementary school level has made responding to events at these schools more problematic.
53. Crisis response teams exist at each of the schools.
54. There is no rapid emergency communication tool in place outside of an e-mail distribution list.



The district needs to re-establish a system-wide safety committee to provide to ensure school preparedness in the event of any number of hazards. The committee should include members from each of the schools as well as city's public safety, health and first responders. This committee should ensure updated building level plans, training and drills are conducted in accordance with the plans and that communication tools exists to respond.

Leadership, Management and Supervision of Staff

55. The administrative team of the district is strong. All are dedicated to producing excellent results for all students. There is a nice mix of highly successful and experienced staff that has varying degrees of service to the Portsmouth School District. I have been impressed with the quality and caliber of the team.
56. Supervision and Evaluation of professional staff has not been conducted in any formal way in recent years.
57. Over time, the district has undergone many organizational changes. For example, the district once enjoyed director's positions in Art, Drama and Music and department heads were once provided release time.
58. Many participants spoke to the strengths and positive school climate attributable to the high school and middle school principals.
59. Most identified the creation of a shared school and city position of an athletic director / recreation director as not only a shining example of cooperation between the school department and the city, but also noted the increased benefits provided to student-athletes as a result.

The School Board has developed a goal to have a comprehensive supervision and evaluation system in place by year's end.

The district should have a clear organizational chart that outlines the clear lines of authority and responsibility, and in conjunction with any new hires, should approve job descriptions so that over time the District has a Job Description Manual that outlines job objectives, performance responsibilities, minimum qualifications, who the position reports to and alike.

Communication and Parent / Community Relations

60. A large number of respondents expressed satisfaction with school to home communication and were somewhat satisfied with overall district communication.
61. Each school has a functioning parent organization where principals are available to answer questions, facilitate communication and promote the programs at the schools.
62. Parents are incredibly invested and active in the schools. Parents have a strong desire to partner with the district to ensure a high quality system.
63. Three hundred eighty (380) families responded to survey questions. I have categorized the responses as follows:
 - a. Funding for the schools was the number one (1) concern of parents. Funding issues were linked to a lack of technology, classroom teachers, paraprofessional support, loss of



department heads, directors, after-school programs, poor facilities, and the loss of programs such as world languages.

- b. The elementary schools need repair. One parent responded: “facilities, facilities, facilities ” and most noted a combination of overcrowding and building improvements were critical next steps for the district.
- c. Many parents expressed a desire to see world languages return to the elementary school and even more wanted to see a more rigorous curriculum for those students who are high achieving students.
- d. The website is run through the city’s IT department. Some respondents would like to see a more robust web page.
- e. The large majority of participants believe there are many good things happening in all of the schools and attention should be dedicated to communicate the many successes and good news stories to all citizens.
- f. A great deal of additional information and opinion was offered through the survey and the data will be shared with the School Board at a later time.

The School Board should develop specific strategies for improving communication about the Portsmouth schools, including a public information officer who can undertake the district and school web-pages and ensure they are content rich and up-to-date as well as highlight the good news stories and solid performance occurring in the district.

The School Board has taken steps to address facility needs by requesting a facilities assessment through the city’s FY 2011 Capital Improvement Program. The formation of a committee in January 2010 to look at program, facilities and make recommendations should involve community members and their efforts should be widely communicated to all stakeholders.

Part III

Data Collected by School / Stakeholder Groups

Expectations of the Superintendent

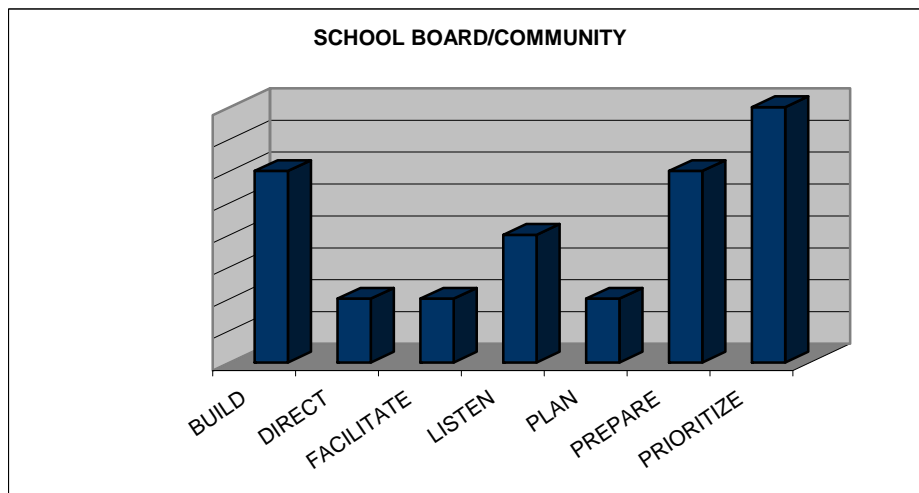
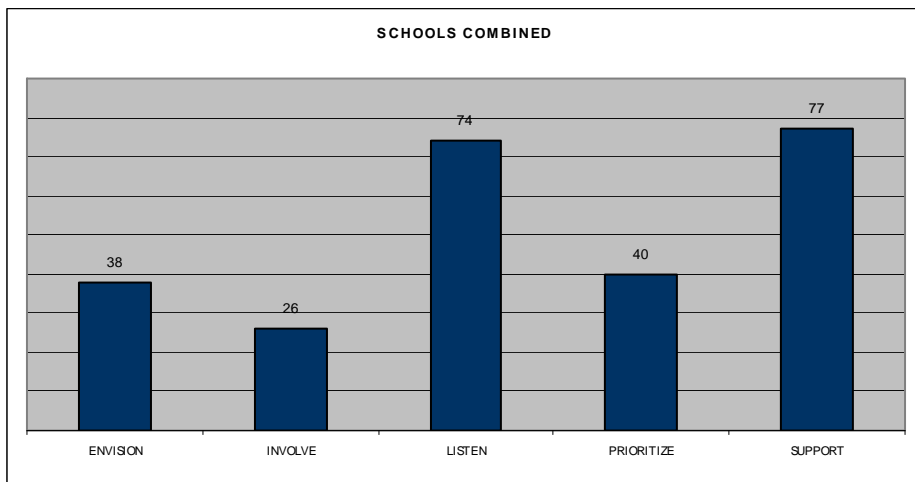
As part of the process I asked participants to outline what they expected from the new superintendent. Respondents were given a sheet with thirty action words and asked to select three critical actions they believed were the essential activities. Typical responses include:

- “Lead”
- “Be supportive”
- “Communicate”
- “Keep smiling”
- “Listen, then do not be afraid to move the district forward”



- “Be open, honest and straightforward”
- “Get into the buildings”
- “Maintain a sense of humor”
- “See what we have, set priorities, preserve and protect what we have”
- “Keep moving us forward”
- “Set a goal, get better, and set the next goal”
- “Be involved in the conversations”

The top five action words identified by school groups make clear they expect the superintendent to “support” and “listen” while the key actions selected by the board and community are to “prioritize,” “prepare,” and “build.”



*Cultural Norms Inquiry Assessment*

Additionally, all staff were also asked to complete a cultural norms inquiry to see what elements were seen as the strongest in the district as well as any areas that might need attention. The tool looked at the following areas and respondents were asked to identify, using a seven-point scale, where they would rate the district. The list below captures the tool and the low range to the high range.

Collegiality: Lack of professional interaction to staff works well together (Low) vs. exchanges ideas and learns from one another (High).

Experimentation: New ideas and techniques are rare to in Portsmouth (Low) vs. it's okay to try out new ideas (High).

High Expectations: Little evidence of value or support for high performance (Low) vs. superior performance and continual professional development are expected and valued (High).

Trust and Confidence: There is little trust and confidence exhibited in the organization (Low) vs. there is a high degree of trust and confidence in the organization (High).

Tangible Support: There is a lack of consistent allocation of resources to professional development (Low) vs. time and resources are priority commitments to professional development (High).

Reaching Out to the Knowledge Base: There is little discussion of teaching and learning accompanied by a belief that teaching is innate (Low) vs. teachers and administrators are continuously reaching out to expand their repertoires and capacity to help learners (High).

Appreciation and Recognition: Little value is placed on what teachers do with students (Low) vs. good teaching and exemplary efforts are regularly honored and valued (High).

Celebration, Caring & Humor: Humor and laughter are rare and there are infrequent opportunities to celebrate successes and demonstrate appreciation for one another (Low) vs. caring, acknowledging significant events and celebrating personal and professional benchmarks are common (High).

Involvement in Decision-Making: There are infrequent opportunities for input or involvement in the decision-making process (Low) vs. the decision-making process includes frequent and regular opportunities to influence issues and policies (High).

Protecting Time: There is seemingly little thoughtful planning given the amount of time staff spend in meetings / paperwork (Low) vs. instruction and planning time are highly valued and staff time is protected (High).

Traditions: There are few special functions that are important to school district members (Low) vs. there are many special functions which are important to district members (High).

Honest, Open Communication: People rarely dialogue, discuss, confront and resolve a matter in a constructive manner (Low) vs. the organization promotes communication where people can disagree, discuss, confront and resolve matters constructively (High).



While there was a little variability when analyzed by school, there was enough consistency across the district to state that the four strongest cultural norms in the district are:

1. Experimentation
2. Collegiality
3. Caring, Celebration and Humor
4. Reaching out to the Knowledge Base

The following areas were identified as most neglected:

1. Tangible support
2. Protecting Time
3. Involvement in Decision-making

Parent Survey Results

Finally, the parent questionnaire rating general impressions of the district is captured below.

SAU 52 Parent Questionnaire

Please rate your general impressions in the following areas of the Portsmouth School District:					
	Highly Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Highly Favorable	Response Count
Quality of Teaching Staff	1.7% (6)	2.5% (9)	53.0% (187)	42.8% (151)	353
Academic Programing	2.0% (7)	12.4% (43)	63.1% (219)	22.5% (78)	347
Facilities	6.6% (23)	32.3% (113)	44.6% (156)	16.6% (58)	350
Extra/Co-Curricular Offerings	2.3% (8)	11.9% (42)	55.1% (194)	30.7% (108)	352
Student Support Services (i.e. Nursing, Guidance, Social Work)	1.5% (5)	11.2% (38)	62.2% (211)	25.1% (85)	339
Technology	3.9% (13)	26.1% (88)	57.0% (192)	13.1% (44)	337
				Comment:	174
				answered question	354
				skipped question	3



Conclusion

A key rationale for completing an entry plan was to allow me to learn about the Portsmouth School District. Since the process began last July, I have been impressed with the quality and caliber of all staff; moreover, the citizens I met ranging from all school board members, city councilors, citizens to parents have a strong belief in the school district and only want to see it continue to improve. I thank everyone who assisted me in the process.

The report begins identifying the overarching elements people “brag” about when talking about the Portsmouth Schools. All stakeholder groups see the quality and commitment of the staff, the varied and rich programming in the district, and indeed the community of Portsmouth itself as the central strengths or areas where they are most proud. Often, I heard wonderful stories relating their experiences with the Portsmouth School District. The degree to which folks identified these strengths is remarkable.

While the report begins with the successes and highlights, this reports is also intended to mark a shift from entry planning to transition, and to that end, another key rationale for this plan was listening to stakeholders expressing their views of priorities and challenges that lie ahead for the district would help set the stage for future planning. I have attempted to capture those observations and/or perceptions in a straightforward manner. To be sure, there are a number of challenges ahead. Renovating the middle school, addressing the long neglected infrastructure in our K-5 schools, integrating 21st century technology into classrooms are just a few of challenges we face in an effort to deliver on our mission. Where issues have been raised, I have offered recommendations that I hope will serve as a jumping off point for discussion. Some recommendations can be accomplished rather painlessly, while others will require significant time, careful planning and substantial financial investment.

Finally, while it is important to develop plans to address funding, facilities, technology and other items herein, the mission of the Portsmouth School District is to educate all students to high levels. At the end of the day, it is all about student learning and high levels of achievement for each learner. I am excited because, through the Professional Learning Communities process, the dedication of staff, and support of the community, the district is poised to take those next steps and ensure continuous improvement for each learner. This is the most important challenge ahead. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to realize our mission.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Superintendent of Schools