Higher Aspirations

HEAD OF SCHOOL
ENTRY PLAN

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Coming together to build an outstanding and innovative international school in the Solomon Islands

Woodford International School
The Woodford International School Board of Management has charged me, as incoming Head of School, with improving achievement for all WIS students and making the school’s systems and processes more effective and efficient.

The WIS Vision Statement articulates the overall goal broadly and clearly: To be recognized throughout the region as an outstanding and innovative international school community that motivates students to be respectful, globally minded and academically successful. In addition, the School’s Mission Statement explains how this will be achieved: Woodford International School provides a dynamic learning environment through an internationally recognized curriculum that encourages and fosters the intellectual, social and physical development of our students.

How close is the school to fulfilling our higher aspirations? What are the challenges that must be addressed to complete the journey? As Head, I must address these issues and many others to ensure that WIS is on a path to become the nation’s and the region’s best school, offering all WIS students the opportunity to excel.

This document is my entry plan. In it I will provide the framework for my activities from now through the end of the first semester of 2016. The entry plan will cover my first 100 days as Head, as well as the months that follow through the end of June, 2016.

My entry plan and my work as Head will be guided by a key tenet put forth by Stephen Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He says that leaders must “seek first to understand, then to be understood.” The transition activities outlined in this plan are designed to enable me to quickly and effectively listen to and learn from a wide range of people involved directly and indirectly with the WIS community and programs.

Woodford International School is viewed throughout the region and across the globe as the premier school in Solomon Islands. During my time in Honiara for the interview, that perception was confirmed numerous times. I will spend my initial months at WIS determining what it takes to “be recognized as an outstanding and innovative international school”, and ensuring that the right systems and people are in place for the task before us, working with the entire learning community to nurture a shared focus on this goal.

The Board and I share a strong sense of urgency about this work. As a result, I will begin with a thorough and exhaustive assessment of our organization and its functions. I will seek to develop a clear sense of the strengths, challenges and fault lines. The next step of this process involves having courageous conversations around the work while making some important decisions. To help in this process, I will work hand in hand with the Board, the School Leadership Team and my administrative staff to review the Strategic Plan, organizational chart, and the state of teaching and learning in the WIS classrooms. Additionally, this team will review organizational culture, climate and levels of effective communication.

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

- Stephen Covey
Goals

This entry plan sets forth five broad, overarching goals and establishes entry activities for each one:

1. **Student Learning:** To focus on student learning and the growth of the whole child through the alignment of resources and organizational efforts, ensuring all students leave WIS well-prepared for the next step on their educational journey and their life's path.

2. **Governance & Leadership:** To develop and support highly effective school governance and leadership that results in consistency of purpose, continuity and teamwork by nurturing a productive and collaborative relationship with the WIS Board of Management.

3. **Culture & Climate:** To establish a positive climate throughout the learning community that is focused on a shared purpose, respectful interpersonal relationships, high expectations for student success and continuous improvement.

4. **Operational & Organizational Accountability:** To develop and improve systems designed to maximize organizational effectiveness and operational accountability in support of the WIS mission.

5. **Community Engagement:** To build trust, confidence and shared purpose through open, honest communication and building positive relationships.

To reach these goals, I will follow this format:

**Listen and Learn:** Analyze and study performance data and existing school policies and procedures. Hold face-to-face meetings across the community with the goal of presenting interrogatives that have the following overarching themes: 1) what are we doing, as a learning community at large, that we should KEEP doing? 2) what are we doing, as a learning community at large, that we should IMPROVE on? 3) what are we doing, as a learning community at large, that we should STOP doing? 4) What aren’t we doing, as a learning community at large, that we should START doing? 5) As a member of the learning community, what is your proudest achievement and what is your greatest challenge? 6) If there were one goal you would like to see accomplished during the upcoming school year, what would it be?

**Share and Prepare:** Share first with the Board, then with the school faculty, and finally with the entire community what I have learned during my entry. Throughout this time I will also share my own leadership story, educational philosophies, core values, hopes and aspirations for our work together. The purpose is to establish a positive tone, create strong working relationships, and instill a sense of urgency about the important work before us.

**Plan and Build:** Using a comprehensively created report of findings, along with valuable feedback from students, parents, teachers, principals, members of the community and The Board, we will review the current strategic plan with an expectation to reinforce effective items, refine areas of need and opportunity, and energize the WIS community as we work collaboratively towards a shared purpose.
1. **Student Learning:** To focus on student learning and the growth of the whole child through the alignment of resources and organizational efforts, ensuring all students leave WIS well-prepared for the next step on their educational journey and their life’s path.

Providing a rigorous curriculum and program of experiences that prepare our WIS students to be ready for the next step on their educational journey is the ultimate goal and responsibility of all members of the WIS learning community. If we aspire to be recognized as an outstanding and innovative international school, we must prepare ourselves to deliver high-quality instruction and provide effective feedback while focusing our highest aspirations on the learning and growth of our students in everything we do.

**Actions:**

- Review any instructional audits completed by outside groups such as the International Baccalaureate and determine follow-up steps
- Analyze patterns in student achievement data and achievement gaps to evaluate the current state of teaching and learning
- Assess our school’s expectations for all students’ academic success and our school’s commitment to meeting the needs of all of its diverse learners
- Evaluate the use, balance and effectiveness of current formative assessments, their alignment with the instructional program and how accurately they measure student growth and progress
- Meet with the WIS instructional leadership team to discuss achievement data, instructional program alignment, current goals and priority action areas for the school
  - Determine the scope and breadth of WIS curricula
  - Determine the degree of rigor embedded in the current curricula
  - Determine how well current curricula aligns with external standards
- Establish a “data dive” protocol to regularly review formative and summative assessment data
- Assess WIS professional development and our capacity for meeting the professional growth needs of principals, teachers and central-office staff; determine the degree to which professional development is job-embedded, differentiated and focused on student outcomes
- Analyze the current budget to determine appropriate levels of financial support for building teacher capacity through professional development
- Inventory all technology-based instructional equipment and software, and determine readiness for 21st-century learning and blended-learning opportunities
2. Governance & Leadership: To develop and support highly effective school governance and leadership that results in consistency of purpose, continuity and teamwork by nurturing a productive and collaborative relationship with the WIS Board of Management.

Aspiring to be recognized as an outstanding and innovative international school requires trust, a shared vision and a unified effort from the governance and leadership teams. This is personified in the relationship between the Board and the Head of School. Relationships must be cultivated with each member of the board in addition to the collective body. I will commit to working with the WIS Board on issues of core values, beliefs, strategy and governance. This relationship is essential for continuous improvement, student learning and growth, and our progress developing a top-notch, world-class school.

Actions:

- Engage in one-on-one meetings with Board members to deepen relationships and school visits with individual members to broaden perspectives
- Hold first Board retreat to discuss communication protocols, roles and responsibilities, norms of behavior and interaction, and expectations for my first year.
- Review the WIS Board election calendar and the WIS Constitution to assess continuity of governance
- Review process, structure and timeline of current strategic plan and budget
- Examine the current protocols and processes for addressing constituent services
- Develop and begin using appropriate communication protocols between the Board and Head
- Conduct three-on-one breakfast/lunch/dinner meetings with all prospective, new, returning and departing Board members to continue to build positive, productive relationships
- Meet with the Board chairperson and committee chairs to determine how they work in partnership with the Head and School Leadership Team
- Collaborate on a performance evaluation format with objectives and indicators of success to be used to evaluate the Head of School and the Board
- Establish regular meeting times with the Board chair and vice chair for reviewing and constructing agendas, agenda review processes and yearly calendar
- Visit various community organizations and functions with Board members
3. Culture & Climate: To establish a positive climate throughout the learning community that is focused on a shared purpose, respectful interpersonal relationships, high expectations for student success and continuous improvement.

Culture has been defined as “how we do things around here” and climate as “how we feel about how we do things around here”. In order to foster a positive, nurturing school climate we must develop a strong culture of high expectations for student learning and growth, which values continuous improvement. This culture is created through a sense of shared purpose, shared responsibility and collaboration. These actions are vital if we aspire to be recognized as an outstanding and innovative international school.

**Actions:**

- Establish productive, positive relationships with school leaders, teachers, administrative and support staff, students and parents

- Assess the quality, quantity and effectiveness of all existing forms of internal communication with various stakeholders

- Establish regular interaction and feedback loops for school leadership

- Establish an organizational norm for open, effective and consistent communication throughout the school and within our community

- Schedule before- and after-school Head coffees to be held at various sites on a monthly basis to hear ideas, concerns and suggestions

- Schedule meetings with principals and school leadership teams and establish regular meetings with these groups

- Create a school-wide climate survey to gain a comprehensive picture of and baseline measurement for school climate

- Assess the school’s ongoing commitment to valuing diversity and engaging in positive cultural competency development

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

- African Proverb

This entry plan is based on the work of Barry Jentz and Joan Wofford, authors of *The Entry Plan Approach: How to start a leadership position successfully - Education edition* and adapted from the entry plans of Cedrick Gray, Superintendent of Jackson Public Schools in Jackson, MS and Heath Morrison, Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in Charlotte, NC, USA.
4. Operational & Organizational Accountability: To develop and improve systems designed to maximize organizational effectiveness and operational accountability in support of the WIS mission.

Fully realizing the WIS vision, as well as the goals set out in the Strategic Plan, requires a collective effort from all support areas in the school. Consistent, high-performing, results-oriented systems and clear processes and procedures must be in place. WIS administration must make sure we operate efficiently, with the sole purpose of supporting the work being done in the classrooms. This requires a highly effective, cross-functional team of professionals who are dedicated and committed to student growth and achievement.

Actions:

- Establish regularly scheduled meetings with the School Leadership Team and set clear understandings of roles, responsibilities, expectations and systems for mutual accountability
- Review the current central-office structure to determine the level of focus on student learning and growth, and maximizing operational efficiency
- Request briefings from all functional unit managers / coordinators providing an overview of their current areas of responsibility, key initiatives under way with projected timelines, a review of current and potential problems in each area of responsibility and major decisions needing to be made in 1 month, 3 months and 6 months
- Review all critical documents, including the organizational chart, constitution and bylaws, parent, student and employee handbooks, policy and procedures manuals, the strategic plan and student achievement data
- Conduct a retreat with the School Leadership Team to review the school’s strategic plan, improvement plans, recent achievement data, current or anticipated vacancies and to discuss leadership team structures and practices
- Conduct an organizational audit to review alignment, coherence and efficiency of the current organizational structure
- Initiate plans to establish or review key metrics and service goals for each functional unit to ensure level of performance can be determined and measured in alignment with core function and support for student learning and growth
- Assess current accountability measures and determine data to be collected, examined and analyzed at quarter, mid-year and end of year reviews
- Review financial department operations, audits, budgets, financial projections, and the process for building the annual operating budget to assess alignment that supports student achievement
- Review crisis communication plans and overall safety plans for efficiency and effectiveness and make any changes or adjustments needed; Conduct a risk management and insurance audit
- Examine the effectiveness of the information data management system, especially around student achievement, communications, budget development and monitoring, and human resources
5. Community Engagement: To build trust, confidence and shared purpose through open, honest communication and positive relationships.

Having spent a substantial portion of my life and my career in Africa, I am quite fond of the proverb “it takes a village to raise a child.” In schools today, that means community involvement and engagement is essential to effective schools. I will focus on engaging and mobilizing parents and community stakeholders in the pursuit of “Higher Aspirations”, and making WIS worthy of recognition as an outstanding and innovative international school, working to keep communications open and transparent. I will also focus on learning the culture, history and expectations of WIS, Honiara and the Solomon Islands. I will be proactive and deliberate in reaching out to all stakeholders – listening to those traditionally underrepresented as well as those traditionally engaged with WIS.

“It takes a village to raise a child.”

- African Proverb

International schools are naturally diverse; and to be most effective, our shared purpose, decisions and programs must reflect a wide range of viewpoints and cultures.

Actions:

• Contact key community leaders and government offices identified by the Board and staff to introduce myself, build relationships and engage in meaningful dialogue

• Conduct a communication audit to determine effectiveness of programs and protocols and develop a comprehensive communication plan

• Reach out to critical stakeholders to establish routine meetings, communication protocols and reciprocal dialogues, focusing on increased student achievement and continuous improvement

• Schedule meetings with key parent groups to create communication protocols and develop feedback loops

• Schedule meetings with student groups for initial listening and learning sessions

• Attend services at area houses of worship to build relationships with the faith community and hear their concerns and ideas

• Increase opportunities to promote Woodford International School’s image within the community, within the region, and across the globe and to develop advocacy for what is effective and working well WIS
The First Day of School

On January 18, my first day at WIS as Head, I plan to meet with the administrative staff, Principals, Board members, and with key members of the community. I will conduct these group “feedback loop” meetings in the morning and spend the afternoon touring the campus and meeting with the admin and support staff as they ready the campus for the opening of school. I will direct my staff to identify students who will not be returning to WIS when it opens, and arrange to meet with the families of each student to determine what could have been done to keep them in our school. We should also determine what their plans are for the immediate future and how we may help them be successful. The day will conclude with a debriefing with the Principals on plans for the opening of school.

On the first day of school, and again each day during the first week, I plan to be available at the front gate to greet students and their families during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal, and to visit each classroom during the school day. I will conclude the first day with a debriefing with the Leadership Team and administrative staff and an evaluation of the quality of the first day and opening week activities, making any necessary adjustment and improvements.

Near the end of my first 100 days, I will have learned a great deal about WIS and be ready to report out on those findings. Through multiple meetings with key stakeholders, some initial ideas will have been developed regarding our direction for the future. To ensure transparency and inclusion throughout the process, there will be a link on the WIS website with updates on the progress of my plan, calendar, people with whom I’ve met, and public events and forums. Around this time, another Board retreat will be scheduled to announce findings, propose plans and collaborate with the Board on a planning system to drive improvements in student achievement and organizational efficiency. Proposed plans and agendas will also be communicated to the school community.

Finally, as my first 100 days as Head of School at Woodford come to a close, I will conduct a 360-degree evaluation survey. Those surveyed will include representative samples of all stakeholders in the WIS learning community. The survey will assess the effectiveness of the strategies and activities put forth in this document, the foundations laid throughout the process, and my entry and aspirations as the new leader of the Woodford International School community.