

Exploring Opportunities and Continuing Traditions of Excellence at Barrett Elementary School



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When a new principal arrives at a school that has said farewell to a longtime leader, there are understandably feelings of loss and uncertainty about the future. As I developed my plan for entry to the Barrett community, I tried to address these concerns by ensuring that all stakeholders' voices continue to be heard. I have also worked to craft a plan that facilitates my efforts to become more familiar with the traditions and practices that have fostered a successful academic program and a welcoming school community.

As Barrett's new principal, I look forward to working with everyone to learn more about the school's history and culture while we begin the process of writing the next chapter. This entry plan has been designed to provide quality time to build strong relationships with our students, families, staff, and the entire Barrett community. I particularly welcome the opportunity to learn about and embrace the school's two signature programs: Project Discovery, which fosters hands-on learning related to science, math and technology, and Project Interaction, which develops students' ability to communicate about their learning and fosters strong communication between the school and the community.

My objectives are:

1. To build strong relationships with members of all stakeholder groups, ensuring a welcoming environment and two-way flow of communication.
2. To assess the strengths of the school and existing successful practices and identify opportunities for continued growth to enhance the educational experience for students.

Listening and Learning

It is critical during the entry phase in July, August and September that I meet with students, staff, families, and community groups to begin building relationships. I hope to hear about our students' experiences in the school, their aspirations, and any concerns they may have. Likewise, I want to understand staff members' strengths and personal goals to continuously improve their practice. I look forward to meeting families and ensuring them that I welcome them as full partners in their children's education. It is also important to hear how Barrett has served the community and how the community has supported Barrett.

To fulfill these objectives, much of my time will be spent listening and taking advantage of events that are already planned such as the summer meeting of the Data Leadership Team, the summer meeting of the PTA leadership, open library times during the summer, and other opportunities to meet with families in the coming months.

Objectives and Guiding Questions for Listening and Learning

Stakeholders	Objectives	Essential Questions
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand individual students needs and learning styles Understand and continue traditions that celebrate student learning and success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What strategies have proven effective at supporting student learning? To what degree do students feel safe, accepted and engaged in the learning process?
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand existing parent involvement strategies and procedures that foster student and school success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What methods of communication have been successful for various groups? How is parent involvement contributing to the success of the school? How has <i>Project Interaction</i> supported and enhanced communication with and involvement of families?
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish relationships with staff. Understand individual staff members' strengths and goals for professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have staff members integrated <i>Project Discovery</i>, <i>Project Interaction</i>, and SIOP training to support achievement? How do existing PLC structures and the Data Leadership Team foster continuous improvement of student achievement?
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand, support and enhance the interaction between the community and the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have Barrett students shared their learning and contributed to the community? How have community organizations supported the achievement of students and contributed to a positive atmosphere at Barrett?
Central Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and build relationships with central office teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do professional learning opportunities and central office resources contribute to the success of Barrett students?



Specific Activities to Achieve the Objectives of the Entry Plan

Stakeholders	Initial Entry Phase - Listening, Learning and Building Relationships July–September	Long-term Maintenance and Strengthening of Relationships October Forward
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold summer opportunities to meet and socialize • Participate in summer library sessions and read with students • Participate in classroom learning activities with students in all classes during the first month of school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish lunch groups to listen to student voices on a regular basis • Work with safety patrols and staff to enhance existing safety programs • Continuously observe classroom instruction • Provide opportunities to celebrate student learning and success
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the PTA leadership team to discuss PTA budget and organization for the 2013-14 school year • Hold ice cream socials and other events during July and August, coinciding with open library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular “Coffee with the Principal” chats and opportunities to listen to families in formal and informal settings • Continue principal’s monthly blog posts on Barrett website • Maintain an open-door policy to meet with families about individual concerns
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send an introductory letter to invite all staff to meet during the summer • Meet with data leadership team during the summer to review data and draft plans for the coming year • Meet with staff as school begins to listen to current practices and aspirations for professional learning and future growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously observe instruction and debrief with teachers • Participate with staff in PLC training to strengthen existing PLC procedures at the school • Publicize leadership team minutes, schedule open meetings • Maintain an open-door policy to discuss individual concerns with staff
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a review of existing partnerships and community involvement • Send a letter of introduction to community partners and leaders • Attend civic association meeting during the summer if available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities for additional partnerships for involvement in the school and opportunities for students to contribute to community around the school • Collaborate with art, music, PE, Spanish, Project Discovery, and Project Interaction teachers to enhance displays of student work in the community and provide service to the community
Central Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with central office staff (especially ELA, Math, Gifted, Special Education, ESOL/HILT, Early Childhood, Title I, and Minority Achievement) regarding student achievement data and existing programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with central office staff regarding professional learning activities and resources to support the instructional program at Barrett

What does success look like?

As my first year at Barrett concludes, we will review the objectives of the plan and collectively assess progress. Working with the team at the school, we will determine areas of success and which areas provide additional opportunity for growth. With families, we will assess the efficacy of our systems of communication and involvement, and develop foci to enhance those relationships for the coming school year. With students, we will assess their experience at the school and find ways to celebrate their achievement, hear their voices and encourage their exploration and interests during the coming year. Success will be measured through site-based surveys measuring the degree to which families and members of the community feel informed, welcomed and involved at Barrett. A successful transition will result in the community feeling a sense of continuity and forward movement.

Barrett has a tradition of excellence, focused on student achievement and family involvement. I believe in strong communication between families and staff, and the shared responsibility between the school and the community to contribute to the growth and development of children into lifelong learners and responsible, knowledgeable, participating citizens. My twenty years working with APS and living in Arlington provide me with experiences and connections that will help me build relationships with the Barrett community and lead the school during the next phase of its journey. Together, we will write the next chapter.

Sincerely,



Dan Redding
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