

# Creating Opportunities for Learning at the New Elementary School



**Erin Russo, Principal**  
New Elementary School  
3600 N. Harrison St.  
Arlington, VA 22207

The opportunity to open this new school and dedicate my time and skills to the creation of a premier learning environment within my own community is an opportunity I embrace enthusiastically. Open dialogue, strategic planning, and honest reflection characterize my transition plan. This transition plan will address the following key objectives:

- Creating a new school community built upon trust, respect, camaraderie and open communication
- Establishing a rigorous instructional program that meets the needs of diverse learners
- Developing safe and effective operational systems for a successful opening in September 2015
- Cultivating a positive school culture that allows students and staff to reach their highest potential

## **Listen, Learn, and Share**

As the new principal, I will dedicate time to meet every family and seek to understand their expectations of their new school. Creating intimate time to better know one another is critical to beginning our partnership. I will share my vision of a community-created school that challenges children and adults to reach their highest potential. I will articulate my passion for equipping children with critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and innovation skills. Similar opportunities will be scheduled with each stakeholder group. The chart below outlines sample objectives, essential questions, and action items slated for July, August and September.

After initial introductions, I will continue to be as visible and as approachable as possible within the community by attending concerts, plays, curriculum nights, and special events at neighboring schools and attending meetings held by local PTAs and leadership teams. The following chart outlines sample objectives, essential questions, and action items slated for October, November, and December. Through increased visibility, children will learn I am their advocate and someone they can trust.

## **Strategic Planning**

While the emphasis of the first six months will be on building relationships, strategic planning will simultaneously take place. On the next pages I have identified five areas of focus that will contribute to the creation of a learning environment that meets the needs of diverse learners. A sample of objectives, essential questions, and action items concerning operational development, capacity development, leadership development, cultural development and team building are included. These areas of focus will continue to evolve and are designed to extend beyond the initial six months. Involving all stakeholders in decisions that impact the learning community will continue to be a priority.

## **Assessment, Reflection and, Application**

Decision-making will always be followed by assessment, reflection, and foremost application of new learning. This feedback loop is imperative to building on successes and learning from past actions. Whether it applies to small- or large-scale decisions, a principal's awareness of her decisions and choices and their impact on all aspects of the surrounding environment demonstrates a drive to continually improve.

This transition plan illuminates the path that I will use to bring a new community of learners together. It will transform as I gather information, synthesize a variety of perspectives, and utilize my educational expertise to make decisions that best fit our individual school. Ultimately, our collective efforts will result in a model elementary school where educators and children are inspired to flourish.

Sincerely,  
**Erin Russo**  
Principal, New Elementary School



# Listen, Learn, and Share

July, August, September

Stakeholders	Objectives	Examples of Essential Questions	Action Items
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand students' strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>Understand which interventions have been in place and successful in increasing student achievement</li> <li>Evaluate the use and purpose of enrichment activities that promote student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are your interests and passions?</li> <li>What excites you about your new school?</li> <li>How do you learn best?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in summer school learning activities at McKinley and Jamestown</li> <li>Create summer opportunities to meet, socialize, and share ideas</li> <li>Engage students in school naming process</li> </ul>
<b>Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish positive, collaborative relationships with members of the NES community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your expectation for your child's elementary experience?</li> <li>What expectations do you have of me, as your principal?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create summer opportunities to meet, socialize, and share ideas</li> <li>Meet with PTA Executive Board</li> <li>Engage families in school naming process</li> <li>Build digital identity to facilitate communication</li> </ul>
<b>Community Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate community partnerships</li> <li>Establish positive, collaborative relationships with members of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we build a solid partnership that enhances the school and community?</li> <li>In what ways will our partnership enhance student experiences?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with local businesses, organizations, and agencies to establish routine communication</li> <li>Attend Civic Association meetings and other community events</li> <li>Create meet and greet opportunities with local leaders</li> <li>Meet with local educational program leaders about talented teachers</li> <li>Engage community in school naming process</li> </ul>
<b>County Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance and build effective relationships with central office teams</li> <li>Enhance and build effective relationships with Jamestown, Nottingham, and Taylor leadership teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we support one another in building a strong instructional program?</li> <li>How will our collaboration facilitate a smooth transition for students and families?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Executive Leadership Team members</li> <li>Meet with curriculum and department leaders</li> <li>Meet with leadership teams of Jamestown, Nottingham, and Taylor</li> </ul>
<b>Facilities and Operations; SIGAL Construction; VMDO Architects; Heery International</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish positive, collaborative relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can our varied expertise contribute to the creation of a premiere learning environment?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend bi-weekly Progress Meetings</li> <li>Establish regular communication</li> <li>Review all planning documents</li> </ul>

# Listen, Learn, and Share

October, November, December

Stakeholders	Objectives	Examples of Essential Questions	Action Items
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to learn student names</li> <li>Build trust and rapport with students through increased visibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I support your successful transition to the new school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain visibility by engaging in learning and celebratory activities at the three feeder schools</li> </ul>
<b>Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase positive, collaborative relationships with members of the NES community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can family involvement contribute to student and school success?</li> <li>What volunteer opportunities can contribute to student and school success?</li> <li>How can we create a learning environment that is engaging, challenging, and responsive to student needs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to grow meet and greet opportunities and update families on school progress</li> <li>Attend PTA meetings</li> <li>Evaluate systems for on-going communication and make necessary changes</li> </ul>
<b>Community Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the network of local community partnerships</li> <li>Seek to include national and international organizations as partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we build upon our established partnership?</li> <li>How can partnerships with national and international organizations benefit students' experiences?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish systems and expectations for collaborations between school and community partnerships</li> <li>Seek out daycare and preschool facilities and plan transition activities</li> <li>Continue recruitment discussions with local universities</li> </ul>
<b>County Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to enhance and build relationships with central office teams</li> <li>Continue to enhance and build relationships with Jamestown, Nottingham, and Taylor leadership teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What resources and support are still required to create an optimal learning environment?</li> <li>How can we improve our transition strategies?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboratively create a hiring plan of action</li> <li>Attend professional development sessions and trainings</li> <li>Assess and reflect on transition strategies</li> <li>Meet monthly with Department of Instruction staff to discuss progress</li> </ul>
<b>Facilities and Operations; SIGAL Construction; VMDO Architects; Heery International</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue positive, collaborative relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What instructional leadership viewpoints can positively affect your work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue attendance at bi-weekly Progress Meetings</li> <li>Meet monthly with Facilities and Operations staff</li> <li>Review updated planning documents</li> </ul>



## Strategic Planning

Area of Focus	Objectives	Examples of Essential Questions	Action Items
<b>Operational Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a welcoming, safe K8 campus</li> <li>Establish safe operational and emergency routines</li> <li>Acquire resources that support school success (e.g. furniture, technology, and all other learning materials)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What procedures and partnerships in learning can be established with Williamsburg?</li> <li>What routines produce the safest and most efficient drop off and dismissal?</li> <li>What furniture supports communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking?</li> <li>What technology supports 21st century learning?</li> <li>What technology helps reduce waste?</li> <li>What school systems will best support students, especially special populations, to ensure their continuous improvement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Facilities and Operation staff, Transportation staff, Arlington police and fire leaders, and Williamsburg administration on operational and emergency routines</li> <li>Observe drop off and dismissal routines at other schools</li> <li>Inventory necessary resources to support student and teacher success</li> <li>Develop School Management Plan</li> <li>Establish Professional Learning Communities and guide work</li> <li>Infuse Arlington Tiered System of Supports with daily instruction</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract and hire highly qualified staff</li> <li>Plan meaningful professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What hiring strategies will result in teachers who encourage engagement, pique curiosity, ignite passion and unleash creativity?</li> <li>What hiring strategies will result in optimal non-teaching staff?</li> <li>What are staff strengths?</li> <li>What teacher support systems will we utilize?</li> <li>What data would make our analysis of student learning more meaningful?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Human Resources and to hire the best staff</li> <li>Consult local university programs for rising star teachers</li> <li>Network with other school division leaders</li> <li>Conduct staff needs assessment to target learning</li> <li>Collaborate with Planning and Evaluation to access meaningful data</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish student and staff leadership opportunities</li> <li>Continue my own professional growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What leadership opportunities and structures will support student and staff growth?</li> <li>What do I need to learn to improve my leadership?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create leadership team norms</li> <li>Continue participation in Scope 9 cohort supported by the Statewide K-12 Education Advisory Council of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish relationships with all stakeholders that facilitate collaboration, open dialogue, shared decision-making, and put students first</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the collective vision/mission/values be represented in school procedures?</li> <li>What age-appropriate activities engage children in understanding our school values?</li> <li>What systems for celebrations best reflect our vision, mission, and core values?</li> <li>What school practices support inclusivity?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage all stakeholders in the development of the school vision and mission</li> </ul>
<b>Teambuilding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish team-oriented working relationships based on mutual respect, shared decision-making, and collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What teambuilding activities will increase our ability to work together?</li> <li>What teambuilding activities will promote communication and foster respect and camaraderie?</li> <li>How can teambuilding practices be infused within daily operations?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan large and small-scale teambuilding activities</li> <li>Plan spring and summer 2015 retreats</li> </ul>