

HEIDI L. COOK
ENTRY PLAN
Cambridge Public Schools
Maria L. Baldwin School

Dear Baldwin Community,

I am honored to have been chosen as the principal of the Maria L. Baldwin School and I feel so lucky to be joining an already strong community that is made up of staff and families who love this school. Thank you for being so friendly and open throughout my hiring process and the beginning of my transition. I look forward to finding out more about those things that make the Baldwin such a special place, and how we can work together to help the Baldwin school continue to thrive and grow into the future.

I want to be deliberate and transparent about my entry into the principalship and so I have developed this Entry Plan. I know this plan might seem a bit formal, but I want to be clear about my commitment to hearing a wide range of community voices. I know that authentic understanding of the community is crucial if I'm going to effectively support those things that work and make improvements that will last.

In order to see our school through *your* lens, I will invite each of you to tell me about your individual ideas, dreams, expectations, and hopes for our school. The voices of all families is very important, so I'm including multiple ways to provide feedback in the hopes of getting more input. I will also work in other ways to deepen my understanding of the history of the school, connections in the community, as well as school rules, roles and responsibilities, practices, norms for behavior, and culture.

In short, I want to learn about what *is* working so I can support it, and learn about what's not working so we can collaborate to improve those areas. I hope this process will also help build trust--and I believe that trust between and among all stakeholders is absolutely critical to student success.

It is my plan to present a report of my findings first to Baldwin Staff and the Superintendent, and then to the parent community by January, 2018. These findings will also include recommendations for future actions.

My hope is that this process will be an opportunity for all of us to reexamine this great school and join in some shared understanding of our strengths and weaknesses, and goals for improvement. I thank you in advance for supporting me in my learning. Please read on for more details about my interviews, visits, and the online survey.

Warmly,

Heidi Cook

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Interviews and Meetings

Meet and Greet Opportunities

I'm excited to offer two opportunities for parents to meet me. I will speak briefly and then take questions and mingle with families. I am offering an evening and a morning opportunity for this meeting:

Friday, September 8th, 8:30-9:30AM (location, TBD)

Wednesday, September 27th, 6:00-6:30PM (before Back to School Night), Cafeteria

Staff Interviews and Meetings

I have had an opportunity to meet one on one with a number of staff members already, and I look forward to meeting with the whole staff before school starts. These meetings have been incredibly helpful! I also invite and encourage any staff member or teaching team who'd like to meet with me to set up a meeting to continue our conversations. I know we'll also have frequent opportunities to talk informally. Staff should contact me or see Elaine in the main office to set up an appointment.

Parent Interviews and Meetings

I look forward to engaging with parents and community members and I invite you to meet with me one-on-one or with a group of parents. I know I won't be able to see every family right away, but I'm committed to talking very soon with a wide range of families who represent the entire Baldwin school. I'm holding these meetings over the course of the school year. I have set aside time throughout the school year for this purpose. Please let me know if it's hard for you to get to the school so we can arrange an alternative way to meet (by phone or we can agree on somewhere more convenient). Please sign up for a meeting time by emailing me or calling the main office at 617-349-6525.

Stakeholder Interviews and Meetings

My plan also includes interviews with various individuals and groups at the school and district levels including parent groups (such as Friends of Baldwin) and Community Groups (such as Agassiz Baldwin Community).

General Interview Questions

- 1. Tell me a bit about you and your family and your history with our school and the community.*
- 2. What do you love about the Baldwin School? What should be maintained at all costs?*
- 3. Are there areas that stand out to you as needing improvement? Have you thought about what might help?*
- 4. Is there anything else you think I should know as I transition into this role?*

Online Survey

In addition to in-person interviews, I would like to invite all members of the Baldwin School community to fill out an online survey that should take less than 15 minutes to complete. You should easily be able to complete it on a phone or computer. Your comments will be confidential unless you choose to include your name, but will be used in conjunction with all responses to form themes and think about emerging patterns in the anecdotal data. I hope this is a simple way that you can relay important information about the Baldwin School. Given how busy everyone is, a formal meeting can be a luxury, so candid responses to the online survey will also help me get your perspective. Of course, you are welcome to meet with me *and* fill out the survey as well!

The survey can be accessed at your convenience at <https://goo.gl/forms/NRrKXSaT6JYO1WR62>. You can also respond to these questions in writing or over email and submit them to the main office. If you have trouble accessing this survey, please email me at hcook@cpsd.us and I will email or text you a link.

Online Survey Questions

- 1. Tell me your name, role at the Baldwin (parent, staff member, etc.) and the names and grades of your children (if you're a parent).*
- 2. Please tell me some of the things that you love about the Baldwin School--things that you believe are strong contributors to student success.*
- 3. What are one or two issues that you believe we can improve upon at the Baldwin School? What suggestions do you have for making progress on the issue(s)?*
- 4. What are some important features of the Baldwin's history that I should know about? How have these events/features led us to where the Baldwin is today?*
- 5. What do you believe is the most important aspect of the Baldwin School Principal's role?*
- 6. Please describe anything else that you wish you had been invited to write about.*

Document and Curriculum/Framework Review

I will conduct an extensive review of all formal documents (e.g. School Improvement Plans, Budget Documents, Handbooks, Policies) as well as informal documents that were left for me (e.g. Meeting notes, planning documents, memos).

I will review learning standards and programs (such as Responsive Classroom) that provide the content and frameworks/approaches to instruction at the Baldwin School and in Cambridge.

Classroom Visits

I look forward to visiting each class on the first day of school and throughout the year. I will ensure that students know who I am from the first day of school. I will let them know I am a person they can trust and can approach if they need help. Along with staff, I will work with teachers to find ways to engage with each grade level about their thoughts and ideas for our school.

Reporting What I Heard

Before the February Break, you should expect to hear from me about emerging themes from my entry process. I will look for trends and patterns in what I hear, but I'll also listen for the voices of the outliers. In the early spring, my goal will be to provide you with a summary of trends and possible next steps that is useful for all of us to consider together.

Action Planning and Next Steps

I look forward to beginning an action planning process once I have completed these entry activities. Of course, many decisions will be made much sooner in order to ensure a safe community and ensure that all students are joyfully learning at high levels, but we will not take on new or large initiatives at a school level until I am able to establish trust and understanding.

The action planning will likely take the form of a School Improvement Plan and will be developed in partnership with our entire community. I look forward to this work!

Resources

Jentz, Barry. Entry: The Hiring, Start-Up & Supervision of Administrators. McGraw-Hill (1982).