



*Washoe County
School District*



Superintendent Joe Ernst

September 2024



Introduction

I am honored to serve as the superintendent of the Washoe County School District (WCSD) and grateful to the Board of Trustees for its support and for trusting me to lead our district.

As the newly appointed leader, I am committed to ensuring academic and operational excellence built on a foundation of high expectations, exceptional performance, and shared accountability. I have worked for WCSD for more than 25 years and have “hit the ground running” by reviewing the systems and processes we follow each day in our work. My experience, combined with the work of our district team, has allowed us to carefully allocate resources to support the strategic plan that guides our mission as educators for our children. It is important for our community to see the results of our efforts, and we have begun fine-tuning the ways in which we will provide that information to our families, staff, and members of our community going forward.

I have seen firsthand the transformative impact of highly effective teaching on students’ education. This reinforces this fact: Everything we do in our district and schools must lead to improved academic outcomes for our students. As a WCSD team, we must ensure every student receives the personalized education necessary to reach their full potential.

I firmly believe in the power of strong relationships and the importance of listening. Fostering close and collaborative partnerships with our students, families, staff, and community members is essential. By actively listening to diverse perspectives and engaging in open and honest dialogue, we can address challenges and seize opportunities as a team. By working together, we will provide every student with the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive. Our students deserve the best education we can possibly provide every day, in every classroom in our district, and our community will be greater because of it.

Within my first year, we will make deliberate strides to strengthen our district by providing consistency, exceptional customer service, and effective two-way communication while identifying and implementing our highest priorities effectively and efficiently.

We are so fortunate to serve incredible, insightful, and brilliant students, each of whom possesses their own unlimited strengths and talents. Our district is filled with staff members who bring their own gifts, abilities, and dedication to every part of our organization. We have exceptional community partners and many opportunities to expand and deepen our connections to families and local organizations. We also have unprecedented resources to support academic improvement and to help modernize and improve our school facilities. This is a unique and exciting time for our district and our community.

I look forward to meeting and partnering with you for the continued success and growth of our district. The future of WCSD is bright, and I am grateful to be part of our journey together.

With gratitude,

Joe Ernst, M.Ed.

WCSD Superintendent



Leading with Core Values:

Before I describe my entry plan process and expected outcomes, I believe it is important for me to share the core values that drive my leadership. These values have guided me as a father, husband, and in my career as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, area superintendent, and chief accountability/continuous improvement officer.

CORE VALUES

Commitment
to

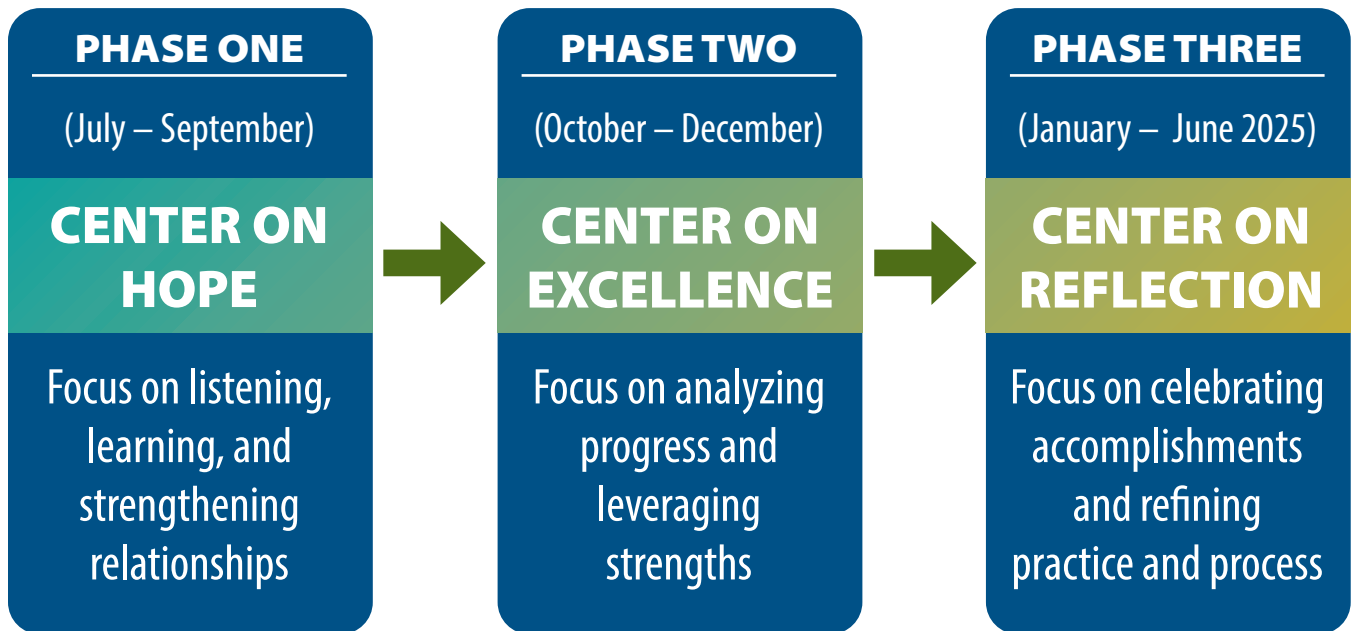
COMMUNITY

Achieving

**ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE**

Pursuing
Goals with

**INTEGRITY &
TRANSPARENCY**



Entry Plan Outcomes:

- Present Entry Plan to the Board of Trustees and community at the September 10, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting.
- Share a summary update report with the Board of Trustees and community at the January 28, 2025 Board of Trustees Meeting.
- Provide a comprehensive update to the community during the State of Education Address in February 2025.
- Provide a full schedule of opportunities for continuous feedback, collaboration, and engagement.
- Develop plans to conduct thorough evaluations of key strategic plan initiatives.
- Implement a system for reporting on our progress as we put our strategic plan to action.



Phase I (July – September 2024)

CENTER ON HOPE:

Listening, learning, and strengthening relationships

- Develop and implement plan to reduce the number of teacher vacancies as school begins and throughout the school year.
- Review organizational structures, staffing, systems, and processes to improve service orientation throughout WCSD.
- Increase physical safety and security measures at schools.
- Immediately move forward with all action steps in the strategic plan.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address chronic absenteeism and increase instructional time.
- Implement plans to conduct thorough evaluations of key strategic plan initiatives and develop a system for reporting our progress as we complete our action steps in the plan.
- Meet with Student Advisory Council to better understand the current student experience.
- Conduct various focus groups to gather feedback and recommendations on improving climate and culture in buildings, reducing non-instructional tasks that impede instruction, enhancing clarity of district communication, and supporting reductions in student absenteeism.
- Meet with students, staff, and families during school visits.
- Deepen collaborative working relationships within the district and with our community partners.
- Build strong collaborative working relationships with our Board of Trustees, employee associations, district staff, and students. Examples include school visits, *Cup of Joe with Joe* for district staff, and students serving as *Superintendent for a Day*.
- Work in partnership with our Board of Trustees to develop WCSD's Legislative Platform and Bill Draft Request for the 2025 Nevada Legislative Session.

Progress to date:

- Conducted comprehensive focus group meetings with staff from throughout the district to gather critical feedback and hear ideas.
- Met with staff and departments districtwide to learn more about their work.
- Connected with diverse community members and leaders to gather input and strengthen partnerships.
- Scheduled first *Cup of Joe with Joe* to hear directly from school staff in a personal setting.
- Significantly reduced classroom staff vacancies, and for the first time in several years, had full staffing of our bus drivers for the start of the school year.
- Increased security and safety measures at schools, including expansion of single point of entry at high schools, installation of security film at elementary- and middle schools, enhanced attendance monitoring on all school buses, and initiation of staff radio communication replacement upgrade district wide.
- Collaborated with local law enforcement agencies for increased pedestrian safety.
- Implemented extensive communication efforts about the application for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and family payment options for school meals to ensure all students have access to meals throughout the school year.
- Developed specific plan to improve student attendance and decrease chronic absenteeism.
- Brought strategic plan to action, including increased CTE opportunities, expanded Student Advisory Councils at all middle- and high schools, improved student engagement such as 6th grade athletics, and expanded co-curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Established reporting and monitoring structures to support strategic plan progress.
- Expanded early childhood education with the August 2024 opening of Cold Springs Middle School Early Childhood Center.
- Collaborated with the Board of Trustees on a Bill Draft Request for the 2025 Nevada Legislative Session to improve access and help clear hurdles for recruiting and hiring qualified personnel to fill vacancies.
- Working with the Board of Trustees, developed WCSD's Legislative Platform for the 2025 Nevada Legislative Session and the 2025-2026 Biennium, which lays out the external public policy priorities of WCSD, provides guidance to take positions on legislation, and assists engagement in intergovernmental relation activity.



Phase II (October – December 2024)

CENTER ON EXCELLENCE:

Analyzing progress, leveraging strengths, and implementing high quality strategic plan

- Review progress with chronic absenteeism and improved academic outcomes.
- Continue to focus on strengthening relationships, structures, systems, and procedures.
- Analyze feedback, data, and efforts to establish a core set of outcomes with completion dates that will improve hope, stability, and establish a future of excellence in our system.
- Review first quarter data to monitor strategic plan action steps for progress and provide responsive adjustments.
- Continue to strengthen operational excellence to support a strong implementation of our strategic plan.
- Review recruitment, hiring, and retention plan alongside fill rates, turnover rates, applicant data, and other human capital indicators of progress to launch a strong allocation and hiring process during the spring of 2025.
- Work thoughtfully with the community and staff to continue moving forward with the Facility Modernization Plan.
- Conduct climate survey to better understand progress being made with culture and climate within WCSD.
- Review staff feedback on current professional learning plan and implementation to date.
- Begin implementation of a new finance/human resource system to improve efficiency, reporting, and ease of use for staff.

Phase III (January – June 2025)

CENTER ON REFLECTION:

Celebrating accomplishments and refining practice and process

- Ongoing recognition of outstanding areas of success and progress within WCSD.
- Finalize alignment of policy and regulations to support implementation of the strategic plan.
- Continue to report and monitor progress in completing our action steps in the district’s strategic plan.
- Review system to track initiatives, examine resource allocation, project health and status, analyze cost variables, prioritize projects, and ensure alignment with strategic plan goals.
- Finalize professional learning plan for administrators and teachers for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, leveraging feedback on professional learning from this year and ensuring it impacts student learning.
- Ongoing transition and implementation of new finance/human resource system.
- Monitor and support legislation and WCSD’s Legislative Platform.
- Conduct budget process for Fiscal Year 2025-26, providing further support to strategic plan initiatives based on level of funding for Pupil Centered Funding Plan in the next biennium.
- Initiate Central Administrative Facilities Study.
- Support the ongoing Legislative Counsel Bureau’s audit of school districts.

*“When we strive to become better than we are,
everything around us becomes better, too.”*

Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*



Priorities as we move forward

CULTURE

Strengthening our organizational culture built on strong relationships, high expectations, academic excellence, and continuous improvement

ENGAGEMENT

Decreasing absenteeism by increasing opportunities to engage students

ACHIEVEMENT

Improving academic outcomes for ALL students

STRATEGIC PLAN TO ACTION

Implementing intentional, aligned, and integrated steps to effectively allocate resources and achieve our desired outcomes

Conclusion

As your superintendent, I have an unwavering belief in our students' potential and firmly believe we can positively impact the trajectory of their education. That pathway begins by building deep and trusting relationships with our students and their families to understand their goals and aspirations.

Working together and partnering with our community is essential to helping our students thrive. It is our duty to provide students with the support, resources, and opportunities they need for success. I look forward to working with you to strengthen WCSD, expand our opportunities, and address our challenges to improve academic outcomes for all our students.



*Together, we will create a brighter future for every student.
"Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much."*

Helen Keller

Strategic Plan Overview



GOAL 1

Strong Start for Every Child



GOAL 2

Student Voice and Advocacy



GOAL 3

Safety and Belonging



GOAL 4

Academic Growth & Achievement



GOAL 5

Empowering ALL Learners

Safety & Belonging

Our team holding it all together

Pillars

- Strong curriculum and instruction
- Strong partnerships among families, schools, and community
- Elevating educators
- Culture of excellence and accountability

Qualities of a WCSD Learner

PHYSICALLY & MENTALLY HEALTHY
Our students will:

- Appreciate strengths in self and others and exhibit confidence
- Demonstrate ownership of personal goals, behaviors and actions
- Engage in practices that promote physical, mental and emotional well-being

INSPIRED INNOVATOR
Our students will:

- Be an open-minded, flexible and creative problem solver
- Be willing to take risks and respectfully challenge the status quo
- Demonstrate originality, imagination and new ways of thinking

SKILLED COMMUNICATOR & COLLABORATOR
Our students will:

- Engage with diverse audiences through a variety of platforms
- Actively and positively participate towards a common goal
- Acknowledge diverse perspectives and respond respectfully

RESILIENT LEARNER
Our students will:

- Work towards personal growth with stamina and perseverance
- Find curiosity, relevance and joy in self, environment, education and people
- Demonstrate mastery of academic skills

GLOBAL CITIZEN
Our students will:

- Intentionally act with integrity and compassion
- Seek multi-cultural understanding and embrace the diversity of opinion
- Make safe, legal, ethical and responsible choices

