Prior to my arrival on campus in November, meetings with the community and with the school board, prompted me to develop an entry plan and community survey. Over the last several months, I undated the board regarding the entry plan progress and on March 8, I shared data from the community survey as well as my final entry plan report.

The entry plan sought to achieve four goals. The update shared in March included activities from the previous months as well as summary reflections:

**Goal #1: Getting acquainted/ Building relationships:**
To get to know the school district and school community as quickly as possible so as to continue the forward momentum of MM with regard to the culture and climate of the district and the instructional programs needed to carry out the vision for the future of our students.

March, 2016
- Analyzed data from community survey
- Met with building teams and individual teachers
- Met weekly with building administrators
- Worked with BOCES personnel from OMH, MORIC and Herkimer BOCES
- Attended athletic contests
- Met with Bernie Peplinski, Herkimer County Legislative Chair
- Attended Greater Winfield Historical Society meetings
- Formed stakeholder committee to participate in AD/AP selection process
- Met with School Counselors/School Nurses

I have met hundreds of school community members since November 16. My welcome has been very positive and I will strive to continue to develop positive relationships. A key impression from these introductory meetings is how close knit the school community is; how the school is the center of the community; and how many attended school and continue to live and work here.

**Goal #2: Knowledge of documents, manuals, procedures:**
To have a working knowledge and understanding of the processes of the district, manuals, contracts, procedures, key people, committee functions, agendas, roles, and responsibilities.

March, 2016
- Met with Steve Fitch, Chris Haar and Keith Williams regularly
- Facilitated monthly administrative team meetings
• Coordinated a policy review and feedback cycle  
• Met with unit leaders for teachers, support and transportation  
• Met with district architects and construction manager  
• Met with BOCES safety office representative  
• Facilitated APPR negotiations

Every school district has its own way of completing tasks, communicating, and engaging the community. Important lessons have been learned about communication, visibility, and how Mount Markham completes tasks like payroll, accounts payable, enrollment registration, daily schedules, transportation and many other elements of school in its own unique way. Spending time to understanding the MM way has been and will continue to be very important. Just because something is done differently elsewhere does not mean that it is done better and just because something has been done the same way “forever” does not mean that it cannot been done more effectively.

Goal #3: District priorities:
To understand, through the use of data, any issues that need to be addressed with an order of priority.

March, 2016
• Met with Lori Grieco and Lisa Garafalo to understand district use of MLP, OASYS, and past state assessment performance  
• Met with MORIC rep to better understand SchoolTool  
• Work weekly with Finance Manager to understand school finance software  
• Continue budget development work with Mrs. Foss  
• Continue coordination of March 18 Superintendent Conference Day  
• Share regular updates with board of education, administration  
• Worked with John-Henry to develop framework for Smart School Investment Plan  
• Worked with Rick Timbs, Craig Dailey, Frank Reid, Patricia on long term debt and small capital project outline

The superintendent cannot have one priority. Concurrently, the superintendent works on many issues and many priorities. Among these issues, developing a budget, responding to personnel issues, student conduct issues, community concerns, academic program issues, professional development, APPR negotiation, staffing, building safety, transportation issues, and many other issues large and small must be attended to and given necessary attention and follow through. Whenever possible, data is collected to support decision making. These data can be quantitative or qualitative; however, data collection and analysis is critical to a continuous progress model for school improvement.
Goal #4: the District as it relates to the community, the area, the State:
To build relationships with local and state political leaders and fellow superintendents to advocate for future growth and stability of the economic, financial, and academic future of Mount Markham.

March, 2016
- Attended Town of Winfield meeting
- Attended CASDA program on gap closing schools
- Attended PAC meeting
- Attended Building team meetings
- Met with Mount Markham Foundation
- Met with Mount Markham Marketing Committee and Greater Winfield Historical Society
- Attended program with Mohawk Valley superintendents including Bob Lowry, statewide fiscal expert working for NYSCOSS

Advocacy, diplomacy, and making connections are important roles of the superintendent. Meeting key community and state leaders supports the Mount Markham story and allows me to emphasize key issues with which we contend. Initiating contact with the town governments is an important step and link to future opportunities to discuss opportunities for sharing and support.

Completion of the entry plan has allowed me to make a successful transition into the Mount Markham School Community. Mount Markham is a proud school district with a long history of supporting student development and achievement. It is also a school district with a long history of community support and involvement.

I am proud to serve Mount Markham and it is my hope to continue this service, working with our school board to provide our school district with experienced, professional, and sustained leadership.

Mount Markham Reflective Survey
In support of the entry plan, I sought to gather feedback from the community. I developed a survey and shared this survey via email with all Mount Markham staff and with the broader community via our website. Below, I summarize the results.

The survey asked eight questions:

1. What are you most proud of about the school district? What do we do well?
2. What are the three top challenges facing the school district during the next 3-5 years?
3. What traditions and values must we preserve as we move forward? Why are these important?
4. What is one piece of advice that would help me be effective in my new role?
5. What is one thing you would like to change or improve over the next school year, so that we can continue to provide a first-class education for all students?
6. What skills and qualities will our students need to thrive in the future?
7. How would you describe the culture and climate of the school district?
8. What is one issue that, if we dealt with it, would improve the effectiveness of the school district?

About the Respondents
Teachers make up the largest proportion of survey respondents (N=64); 60% of the respondents indicated that they were teachers; each school building had a representative response rate. Between 24-29% of the respondents indicated that they were connected to either the elementary, middle or high school;

1. What are you most proud of about the school district? What do we do well?

51% of the respondents were most proud of the way that school district supports the needs of its students; 43% of respondents indicated that they were proud of the community (strength, communication, acceptance, ability to overcome challenge); 18% of the respondents indicated pride in the quality of our facilities and grounds; 16% indicated that they were proud of the faculty and staff.

2. What are the three top challenges facing the school district during the next 3-5 years?

Respondents shared many challenges that the district will face in the next three to five years, including: improving the campus climate; parent engagement; professional development; use of technology; and enrollment concerns.
The top three priorities were related to academic challenges, fiscal challenges and staffing challenges.

- 12% of the respondents suggested that hiring new staff to replace veteran staff would be a challenged faced by the district in the next 3-5 years;
- Respondents expressed the strong need for the school district to be fiscal minded, to understand the ability of the community to support the tax ley (over one third of the respondents included school finance as key challenge for the district);
- Nearly 65% of the respondents shared some form of academic challenge the district will face in the next 3-5 years-strength and availability of student programs; the need for early intervention; the need for curriculum alignment and concerns about academic standards and testing topped the list of challenges in this area.

3. What traditions and values must we preserve as we move forward? Why are these important?

Nearly half of the respondents shared comments about community in their response; the word/phrases: pride, rural, close knit, and agriculture were frequently shared. About 10% of the respondents mentioned valuing and preserving the strength of school programs; positive communication/collaboration and teamwork.
4. What is one piece of advice that would help me be effective in my new role?

Well over 40% of the respondents encouraged me to be an effective communicator, including actively listening to staff, being transparent, and clearly, and consistently communicating the district’s vision and mission. Nearly 16% of respondents emphasized the importance of being visible in our schools and in the community. Others encouraged me to learn about the community; make decisions based upon the best interest of students, and be a consistent leader.

5. What is one thing you would like to change or improve over the next school year, so that we can continue to provide a first-class education for all students?

Many areas were identified by respondents as being opportunities for improvement or in need of change. There were 18 separate areas mentioned. Among the areas mentioned by more than five respondents (8%) were professional development, K-12 curriculum alignment, clear direction from administration, and early literacy support. Other areas mentioned include technology, CTE programs, Student support services, student conduct and recruiting more substitutes.

6. What skills and qualities will our students need to thrive in the future?

Many character traits were mentioned in response to this question. Among the character traits, persistence was mentioned most frequently (16%). Other traits mentioned several times include creativity, flexibility, curiosity, and honesty. Respondents mentioned literacy (and numeracy), communication skills, technology skills, financial skills and the ability to solve problems as important skills for our students to be successful.

7. How would you describe the culture and climate of the school district?

Two words consistently appeared (44%) in respondents answer to this question: welcoming and hardworking. Just over 25% of the respondents indicated that our school culture was welcoming. Respondents cited the close knit community and its willingness to welcome and support. Nearly 20% of the respondents focused their comments on a hardworking and dedicated staff.

8. What is one issue that, if we dealt with it, would improve the effectiveness of the school district?

There were more than fifteen separate issues identified that if dealt with would improve the effectiveness of the school district. Among these clear and consistent communication from building and district leadership was mentioned most frequently (10%). Other issues mentioned multiple times include: curriculum alignment, engaging
parents, dealing with poverty, recruiting more substitute teachers, helping staff feel more supported and quality professional development.