



100-Day Plan: CENTRAL OFFICE SERVICES

Recommendations to the Superintendent
January 12, 2017



Every student by face and name.
Every school, every classroom.
To and through graduation.



Superintendent's Focus Areas

Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams coached each project team, provided research expertise and supported development of the plans. She has laid out five areas of focus that guide this process and her work as Superintendent.

Prioritizing educational equity:

"It is critical that we create a District where every person, in every department, is responsible and accountable for the education of all students at every school. We must be devoted to eliminating the opportunity and education achievement gaps for urban youth. We can do this by adhering to a theory of action that ensures strong dynamic interaction between great educators, rigorous and cognitively demanding content, engaged students and families, and community partners that bring coherent supports matched to the specific needs of Rochester children."

Building relational capacity:

"By building shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect, we will improve learning. We will increase engagement and motivation. Recognizing every person's experience as unique, we can connect to each other through a deep understanding and acknowledgement of race, ethnicity, and culture. This will ensure that we are mindful, respectful, and inclusive."

Nurturing innovation:

"We need to consider fresh ideas, and help our schools, leaders, teachers, and students customize solutions for their unique needs. Innovation and customization are essential to ensure that every student gets to grade level, that we accelerate their learning, and get them to graduation."

Creating coherence:

"Fragmentation gets in the way of serving our children, our parents, our teachers, our schools or our community. The "system" needs to be coherent and user-friendly. Coherence does not mean we all must do the same things. It does mean that our work must produce powerful learning for all youth, with equitable and strong outcomes."

Accountability for action:

"The talent is here. The answers are in Rochester. But there's a fifth element of my role as your superintendent. It starts with me holding myself accountable. Holding ourselves accountable for action, and working with a strong sense of urgency."



Table of Contents

I.	Central Office Redesign Team	2
II.	Foundational Framework	3
III.	Theoretical Foundations	4
IV.	Central Office Redesign Project Data Collection	
	A. Central Office Staff	5
	B. RCSD School Leaders	7
	C. RCSD Family & Community Members	10
V.	Report Findings and Next Steps	11

Purpose of the 100 Day Process:

Focused on Central Office Redesign

To undertake a design process with school leaders, Central Office personnel, and parent and community members to identify what effective Central Office support should look like for school leaders and instructional teams, identifying service to parents and community members to both build Central Office capacity to deliver effective levels of support, and determine what metrics the District will use to measure the quality of Central Office support.



Central Office Redesign Team

Team Leaders:	Beverly Burrell-Moore, Chief of Schools
	Dr. Ray Giamartino, Chief Accountability Officer
	Wilhelmina Glover, Interim Chief of Schools
	Harry Kennedy, Chief of Human Capital Initiatives
	Sandra Simpson, Interim Chief of Schools
Project Manager:	Michele Alberti White, Executive Director of School Innovation

Foundational Framework

During her transition into the Rochester City School District Superintendency in August 2016, Barbara Deane-Williams identified her leadership approach with a laser-like focus on five areas: prioritizing educational equity; building relational capacity; nurturing innovation; creating coherence; and establishing accountability for action. This project has centered on reframing Central Office as the primary service center for providing targeted supports to schools. Throughout her entry process and the development of the first phase of 100-Day Plans, Superintendent Deane-Williams surveyed school and District teachers and leaders across the Rochester City School District to receive open and consistent feedback on Central Office services and support, areas of strength and areas of growth. Superintendent Deane-Williams additionally actively engaged in an open-ended community-based Listening and Learning effort— working collaboratively to gather input, insights and reflective feedback from multiple constituencies, including the District’s Parent Advisory Council and Bilingual Council Education, multiple faith-based partners; the Rochester Teachers Association (RTA); the Association for Supervisors and Administrators of Rochester (ASAR); Board of Education Non-Teaching Employees (BENTE); Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals (RAP); business, political, and college and university leaders; and other district stake holders and community members in “Kitchen Table Conversations” and other forums.



Superintendent Deane-Williams charged her Executive Cabinet Team to build a shared understanding of District and community-based needs. Superintendent Deane-Williams charged cross-departmental 100-day project teams with:

- Improving the quality of data dashboards to provide clear, actionable representations of individual student progress
- Focusing and aligning resources for results
- Providing central services and supports matched to school, student and customer needs
- Ensuring safe, healthy and welcoming schools where every student is personally supported to achieve— The focus of this report
- Ensuring timely communication and quality engagement opportunities to build community understanding and involvement

By accessing targeted information on challenges, interactions with Central Office, and suggested areas for development moving forward, Superintendent Deane-Williams’ Central Office project framed the following report. It summarizes initial findings collected and analyzed in relation to the potential redesign process, with the goal of designing our District’s future together to better serve our students, families, schools and community.

Theoretical Foundations



Jody Hoffer Gittell, Ph.D.

A scientific researcher and University Professor of Management in the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, Jody Hoffer Gittell has focused her research on organizational change and effectiveness. She is the Executive Director, Relational Coordination Research Collaborative and Chief Scientific Officer of Relational Coordination Analytics, Inc. In her book, *Transforming Relationships for High Performance* (Stanford Press, 2016), Gittell outlines how relational coordination drives performance in airlines and healthcare, and how personnel as well as systems, within organizations (either) support or undermine its development. Dr. Hoffer Gittell's work has helped begin to frame key aspects of the Rochester City School District Central Office Redesign process, focusing specifically on the interrelationship between positive employee relations and high performance.



Meredith I. Honig, Ed.D.

Dr. Meredith Honig's work has been dedicated to the study of policy, leadership, and organizational change at the systems level. Drawing from her work sponsored by The Wallace Foundation, *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement* (2010) provides specific, research-based insights on how school district central offices, teams, and divisions can 'Reorganize and Reculture to Support Teaching and Learning Improvement,' and do so in a manner that is sustainable within and across the system. Dr. Meredith Honig's work and research as an Associate Professor of Education Policy, Organizations and Leadership at the University of Washington (UW), Seattle has guided the Rochester City School District Central Office Redesign process. It has provided an additional set of research-based lenses specific to the partnerships that are necessary to 'address systemic change for equitable opportunities and outcomes for each and every student, especially those historically underserved by public school systems - recognizing that barriers to educational equity are systemic, that school district central office leaders are in strategic positions to lead within and beyond their districts for systemic changes important to such results, and that they would benefit from new knowledge and support for their leadership.'

The Wallace Foundation and University of Washington



A jointly sponsored research initiative commissioned by the Wallace Foundation and conducted through the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington's College of Education, "The Central Office Transformation Toolkit: Strengthening School District Central Offices in the Service of Improved Teaching and Learning" (2013), a derivation of her earlier work, created by Dr. Meredith I. Honig has provided a set of guidelines and a framework for the Rochester City School District Central Office redesign and research team. With a focus on central office as a support system for helping principals improve teaching and learning at scale (Honig et al. 2010), this resource provides research-based insights on real-life urban applications of the redesign process of redefining central office departments into true teaching and learning supports systems in a long-term, sustainable manner.

Direct Feedback from Central Office Focus Groups

(11/30/16 and 12/8/16)

Decision making must occur with all representatives at the table.

Communication and input to upper management needs to be strengthened through more formal structures with greater input for teaching and learning decisions.

There is a definite need for clear goals and articulated action steps.

The District shared decision-making process needs to be strengthened and clearer expectations for transparent customer input prior to decisions would improve relationships.

Need for improved communication. There are communications sent directly to Principals and other leaders, but we are not included and we often find out information second or third hand.



Central Office Survey Feedback

- Fifty-six Central Office team members responded to the Central Office Redesign Survey providing valuable feedback about how they support schools, Principals, families, students and other Central Office departments.
- The data from the Central Office Survey was reviewed in two additional feedback groups; one focused on operations, and one focused on instruction.

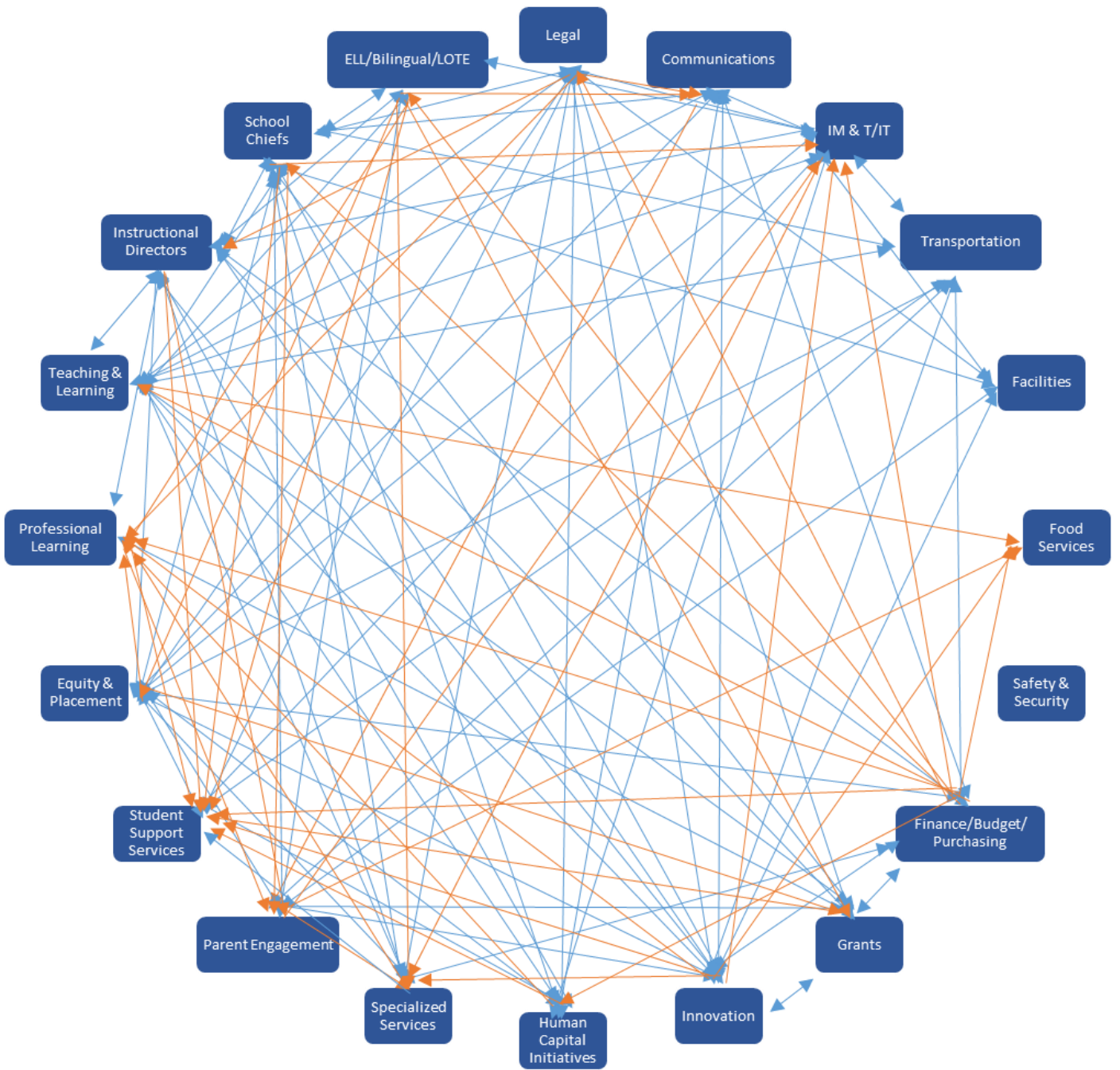
Central Office Findings



- The focus group that included instructional directors felt strongly that their purpose was to directly support schools in whatever means necessary to impact instruction and student achievement.
- Both focus groups felt that they were often left out of major decision making processes and that they had little voice or control in decisions.

Central Office Recommendations

- A shared decision-making process for Teaching and Learning, which includes representative from all departments. The process must include the upper-middle management of departments and not just Executive Cabinet.
- Creation of a Teaching and Learning advisory committee that could inform decision making to ensure that decisions are made with accurate information, historical context or knowledge of impact.
- Adjust Cabinet membership to involve additional Teaching and Learning administrators.





	One-way Interactions: The department regularly interacts/collaborates with the department pointed to.
	Two-Way Interaction: Respondents from both departments regularly interact or collaborate with the departments pointed to.

Direct Feedback from Principal Focus Groups

(10/13/16 and 12/1/16)

“School Chiefs need the supports and resources in order to solve school problems immediately. Often their hands are tied.”

“School Chiefs need teams that are able to be dispatched to support schools as needed.”

“Principals should have more control over the decision making that impacts their building: master scheduling, staffing, budgeting, registrars, placement, Special Education.”

“We don’t know who does what, we go to the people that we know and trust.”

“How do you fix 20 years of being dumped on? You don’t know who to go to.”



RCSD School Leader Survey Feedback

- Thirty-eight school Principals and 41 other building leaders responded to the Central Office Redesign Survey providing valuable feedback about how they are supported by Central Office and work with Central Office departments.
- Two focus groups were held with building leaders; one with all school Principals and another session consisted of a representative group of Principals, who provided direct feedback based on the survey data.

RCSD School Leader Findings

- A Theory of Action is lacking for the District on supporting schools and students.
- School leaders desire increased involvement in decision making with regards to the issues that impact them directly, such as budget, scheduling, staffing and placement.
- School leaders depend on relationships at Central Office that they have created and often utilize these relationships to resolve questions or get needed resources because of turnover at the Executive Cabinet level.

RCSD School Leader Recommendations

- Develop and clearly articulate a prototype Theory of Action and create a process to have everyone respond, shape and understand it.
- Develop a process for school leaders to directly impact the decision-making process for their school. Providing earned autonomy to schools based on a readiness assessment.



Key Takeaways

Continue the redesign process - build a Theory of Action that informs Teaching and Learning, aligning programs, services, budget priorities.

Increase and fund reading and math interventionist teachers to bridge the achievement gaps.

Develop a school-based instructional leadership pipeline.

Increase equity in program placement and access to services and resources across schools – including adding elementary school counselors and site-based registrars for timely master schedule development.

Strengthen inter- and intradepartmental professional learning to align supports to teaching and learning.

Build a data analytics system to access student performance, attendance, and behavioral data – create a model to formally review data by District/school/grade level/student regularly.

Strengthen ELT programming with academic intervention to increase academic achievement as well as focus on students' social and personal development.

Recommendations for Consideration of the Superintendent

Articulate a Theory of Action and establish cross-functional 'Network Teams,' providing direct support to schools through articulated systems and processes to strengthen teaching in our classrooms by July 31, 2017.

Access funding streams by semester 2 and into the 2017-18 budget to provide extensive intervention-based supports. Addressing low student achievement as measured in ELA and Math grades K-12.

Create a formal career ladder and pipeline for RCSD.

Update guidelines specific to equity and placement for all students. Consider adding Elementary School Counselors and full school counselors for K-8 to provide social emotional learning (SEL) supports and programming. Determine alignment of registrars to schools for increased efficiency and support. Mitigate equalizing students with disabilities (SWD) classification rates and program placements and the distribution of SWD across zones and across (District) schools.

Establish a quality standards-based system-wide professional development plan aligned to key District instructional and SEL-based initiatives to be cascaded to all levels and schools.

Assess present systems integration and 'communications processes,' seeking to build e-capacity for data analysis and ease of access –establishing a Research Evaluation and Testing (RET) Team.

Review and assess ELT efficacy by school and realign resources and services with student academic and social-emotional growth.

*Direct Feedback from the
Parent Family Focus Group
(12/6/16)*

Lack familiarity with who to contact or direct you to the right person, often transferred to other.

Placement process needs to be fixed – I have a daughter who is stuck at a school that she does not want to be at...it is not easy to have her moved. She is not allowed to transfer to a school that she wants to be at.

More frequent communication is needed.

“That’s not my job” and “without them taking you to someone whose job it is” ...there is a mentality that the students and families are not the primary focus.



RCSD Family and Community Feedback

- Thirty-eight parents attended a 100-Day Plan Central Office Redesign focus group session.
- Parents were asked to respond to a set of questions in small groups that were facilitated by members of the 100-Day Redesign Team.

RCSD Family and Community Findings

- Parents reported that communication from both the District and their individual schools needed to be improved. Schools varied greatly, but parents felt that every school should have a specific plan for communications and that parents should be involved in the creation of that plan.
- Central Office departments and anyone working with parents on the frontline would benefit from customer-service and relationship-building training.

RCSD Family and Community Recommendations

- Develop and implement a plan for customer-service and relationship-building training for Central Office District employees, as well as school personnel.
- Ensure that information shared with parents and families through the District website, school websites and other tools is complete and up to date.



Key Takeaways

Provide more support for schools

Redeploy Central supports directly to schools to improve student performance. Consider a bounded autonomy, and include these positions:

- School counselors
 - Registrars
 - School psychologists
 - Reading intervention teachers
 - Math intervention teachers
- Provide customer-service and relationship training and increase explicit District office level professional development to improve relational capacity across divisions with the focused intent to provide high quality service to students, families, schools and the community. Develop specific goals, measures, and strategies that align with student outcomes for all District office divisions.
 - Re-establish the Department of Research and Evaluation in collaboration with the Office of Accountability and Information Management and Technology (IM&T). This would streamline data requests, reporting and dissemination of work flow.
 - Create communication protocols, documented and trackable process checklists associated with goals for timely and equitable student programming and placement.

“I feel that Central Office has changed drastically over the past 4-5 years. Principals are not given the autonomy to make sound instructional or organizational decisions.”

-RCSD School Leader Survey Data

Redeploy Central Office resources to directly support and problem solve at the individual school level, ensuring that schools, Principals and students receive the necessary support with a focus on student achievement.

Central Office staff should commit to spending much more time in schools.



Rochester City School District

131 W. Broad Street
Rochester, NY 14614
585.262.8100
www.rcsdk12.org