

# Starting Confused:

## Where leaders start when they don't know where to start

*Starting a new job is inherently confusing, say Mr. Jentz and Mr. Murphy. Using an Entry Plan can transform that confusion into a resource for better decision making by enabling three kinds of timely learning: learning about your new workplace, learning about yourself, and collective learning about new ways of approaching vexing problems.*

**I**t wasn't supposed to be like this. I was the enthusiastic first choice of the search committee and was warmly welcomed by the staff. In fact, a lot of people acted as if I could walk on water. Everybody was open to change and so hopeful about the future. It looked like I had found my dream job, and I was really excited about getting a chance to implement my vision of instructional improvement. What a wonderful start to a honeymoon!

But nine months later, everybody - including me - was disappointed. My brilliant vision was in the trash bin. Conflict had replaced consensus. Trust had disappeared. After such a promising start, all I heard were complaints about process. In the meantime, I was exhausted, overwhelmed, and bewildered. I just didn't know what to do. Honeymoon? My dream job had turned into a nightmare.

Who among us isn't familiar with this story or at least a variation on it? Whether you are arriving to take up a new post or serving in the trenches when a new administrator takes charge, the moment of job entry always seems rich with the possibility for productive change - and freighted with the heady fantasy that the Lone Ranger will ride into town and make everything better overnight. Of course, reality quickly sets in, and we are reminded once again that there are no silver bullets. Like many of you, we have seen this pattern of shattered dreams play out scores of times, and we, too, bear our own scars from mistakes made as administrators entering new jobs.

The simple truth is that, all too often, new administrators start off on the wrong foot - even fail. In fact, as demand for bold school leadership grows and as the rate of turnover in education jobs continues to rise, this problem seems to be getting even worse. However, we believe that there are practical, systematic methods to break this pattern and reap the rich rewards offered by a fresh start in a new position.

In this article, we suggest that many new beginnings go awry because newly appointed administrators fail to address the confusion that is generated by the conflicting demands they face during entry. Disoriented, but under intense pressure to "do something - and fast," these administrators buy into the conventional view that bold leaders hit the ground running. Feeling whipsawed, yet wanting to please, they reflexively hide their confusion and try to appear decisive by acting quickly. In so doing, they often sour their honeymoon.

To avoid bad beginnings, we believe that new administrators must hit the ground learning, rather than running. Entry requires that they build relationships with stakeholders' and develop a process for learning, rather than reflexively focusing on tasks. If one of these supports is missing, the transition will fail. In using this approach, the new administrator establishes authority not by prejudging what needs to be changed immediately, but by taking charge of the process - by demonstrating a clear understanding of how to start.

We call this approach an Entry Plan. Its essential activities consist of writing a plan and

making it public, conducting systematic interviews and site visits with multiple stakeholders, and then working jointly with those stakeholders to make sense of the information as a prelude to making changes.<sup>2</sup>

These activities help new administrators withstand the pressure for premature change by forcing them to collect the necessary startup information as they build trust with their new colleagues. Properly executed, the Entry Plan methodology not only promotes learning about the new job situation but also forces new hires and their organizations to rethink their operating assumptions. In doing so, entry planning lays the foundation for a transformational leadership style that will continue to improve administrative performance long after the entry period is over.

### **CONFUSION AS A LENS FOR ENTRY**

Before looking more closely at the reasons why new beginnings so often go awry, let's set the stage by discussing a powerful conceptual lens through which we can look at the entry process - the notion of confusion. In a companion piece to this article, we suggest that constant change and growing complexity present even the most capable leaders with baffling problems that have no easy answers.<sup>3</sup> The natural result is confusion about what to do. Yet our workplace culture has strong taboos against acknowledging confusion of any kind. In these situations, administrators typically respond by treating their confusion as a liability, denying or hiding it for fear of losing their authority.

To help administrators transform the perceived liability of confusion into a resource, we have outlined a general methodology called Reflective Inquiry and Action or RIA for short. We elaborate on RIA in the companion article cited above, but it consists of five major components: 1) embrace your confusion, 2) assert your need to make sense, 3) structure the interaction, 4) listen reflectively to learn, and 5) openly process your efforts to make sense.

RIA is intended to help administrators use confusion as a starting point for transformational learning and improved decision making. Indeed, we believe that one of the most liberating truths of leadership is that confusion is not quicksand from which to escape, but the potter's clay of leadership - the very stuff with which leaders work to achieve success in a complex and rapidly changing environment. Since few situations hold more potential for confusion than entry into a new position, we believe that the RIA methodology can be productively adapted - in the form of an Entry Plan - to the special circumstances surrounding a new beginning.

To be sure, we harbor no illusions about the ease of embracing confusion. But because stakeholders are more open to the expression of confusion during an administrator's first months on the job, entry offers a rare moment to make confusion the starting point for a process of learning, and it offers an opportunity to establish, right from the start, a leadership approach that addresses the confusion inherent in reaching the elusive goal of helping all children learn. Emergency physicians speak of the "golden hour" - the precious time just after an injury when prompt treatment can improve recovery and eliminate a host of later complications. Entry can be a "golden hour" for establishing the kind of leadership required by public education today.

Our purpose in this article, then, is to apply RIA to the task of beginning a new administrative job. The new administrator establishes authority not by demonstrating an instant grasp of all the answers, but by using an Entry Plan - in RIA terms, a "structure" that enables joint inquiry and learning prior to making changes. Within that structure, the new administrator leads by expressing confusion judiciously and then presenting the information that led to it; by listening reflectively to learn from the responses of key stakeholders; by openly processing attempts to make sense of what's going on; and by providing a new set of structures to further collective inquiry and action.

## UNDERSTANDING BAD BEGINNINGS

In most search and hiring processes, both recruiters and recruited are usually more concerned with making good sales pitches than with offering candid self-disclosure. As new hires, we often emerge from these processes assuming that we already have a firm grasp of what's going on, what's wanted, and what's needed.

A week or two into the job, however, most of us discover that the time of entry is, after all, a time of confusion. Bombarded by conflicting demands in the midst of heightened expectations, we become confused about what we should do and how we should behave.

On the one hand, we are expected by stakeholders to act quickly and with good judgment. We, too, want to act. We're anxious to prove ourselves worthy of our new job and eager to make a difference.

On the other hand, we don't know whom or what we can trust. It's hard to check the accuracy of information when people say, "Don't tell anyone I'm telling you this, but. . . ." It's difficult to know when we're being told what others think we want to hear, and it's not clear who is working in pursuit of what agenda.

On the one hand, we are expected to size up the situation on the run, even as we plunge into the many tasks that await our attention.

On the other hand, the faster we go, the more "new stuff" pops up, as people compete for access and influence. We will be presented with requests, needs, demands, and expectations for decisions ASAP. We start to feel out of control.

On the one hand, we are expected to continue what works and change what doesn't.

On the other hand, we learn that various stakeholders differ sharply about what works, about who can really be trusted, and about which tasks are the most urgent.

On the one hand, as days pass, we feel we need more time to do justice to the new job, so we spend more hours at the office.

On the other hand, we are under pressure at home to attend to family matters, which are

sometimes in a state of upheaval because we've recently moved to a new locale.

On the one hand, from the outset, we are expected to look like we know what we're doing. After all, we're supposed to be able to walk on water.

On the other hand, walk on water? From the outset, we feel like we're drowning. To cover up, we do a lot of bluffing and more than a little guessing.

Faced with such a combination of conflicting demands and high expectations, most of us try to manage (and conceal) our confusion by engaging in behavior that we have labeled "jump reflex" problem solving. This is a pattern of behavior that usually ends up creating even more problems.<sup>4</sup> Here are some examples:

\* We plunge into "the work" while taking a casual and informal "just-a-few-minutes-on-the-fly" approach to sizing up the situation. This approach responds to the expectation that we "do something - and fast," but casual meetings produce chitchat and superficial information that can lead to faulty diagnoses and bad decisions.

\* We unconsciously adopt an either/or approach to leadership in the face of conflicting demands. We try to act as "saviors" (tough new bosses with all the answers) or as "supporters" (nice new friends who involve everyone in a search for the group answer). Either/or thinking undermines leadership. When we "save" an organization by making unilateral changes, we forfeit the knowledge of others, and our changes will go when we go. When we "support," we make friends. But entrenched managerial problems are not fully addressed.

\* We find lots of little things that are "wrong" or that simply "don't make sense." We impose a solution designed to fix them quickly. But fast fixes fail to recognize that how things are done, even little things, often reflects deeply held values and norms, as well as carefully crafted compromises about which stakeholders care strongly. Little changes can trigger surprisingly big repercussions.

\* We promise too much. Big promises certainly respond to the dynamics of the job hunt,

where search committees are often looking for an omniscient expert. The dynamics of leading, however, penalize those who overpromise and thus don't deliver.

\* We become overextended. The pressures of a new job, the psychic costs of confusion, and the frantic pace of jump reflex beginnings can lead to a level of personal exhaustion that also contributes to bad decision making, dashed expectations, and a loss of credibility and trust.

Jump reflex problem solving, which is exacerbated by the conflicting pressures and confusion of entry, often leads to the kind of disappointing outcomes we portrayed in the vignette with which we began this article.

## ENTRY PLANNING

An Entry Plan is designed to slow things down in order to counter the external pressures and internal responses that inexorably lead to jump reflex problem solving. Even more important, an Entry Plan enables three kinds of learning: learning about your new place, learning about yourself, and collective learning about the organization as whole. The result is that, as a new administrator, you make better decisions that are genuinely understood and acted upon by the people who must implement them.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the five steps of entry planning. In presenting the steps, we hope to convey the flavor of the entry enterprise by telling the tale of Jacob Smith, a newly appointed school superintendent. Drawn from our work with education professionals,<sup>5</sup> this composite story demonstrates best practice in dealing head-on with the confusion encountered during entry, and it illustrates the courage that such behavior requires. While the details of beginning a new job will differ sharply from place to place, the basic steps remain constant whether you're becoming a principal in Montana or a superintendent in Pennsylvania. Smith's story must be adapted to the particulars of your situation.

**Step 1. Designing an Entry Plan.** As Smith sips his morning cup of coffee, he nervously ponders the new role he will officially assume in about two months. The night before, the chair of the board of education announced to a round of applause that Smith was to be the new superintendent of schools. And now Smith is determined to avoid what he has seen so often - sky-high expectations for a new leader, followed by harsh disappointment. With some trepidation, he decides to put together an EntryPlan.<sup>6</sup>

In thinking about the objectives of his EntryPlan, Smith starts with the question of when to go public with the EntryPlan methodology. He aims to distribute his plan on or near his first official day on the job so that he hits the ground [learning - both symbolically and practically].<sup>7</sup>

Next, he asks himself, "Whom should I be meeting with, about what, in what order, when, where, and why?" He decides on a number of answers:

\* He will interview individually all the members of his school board and administrative cabinet, all the principals, and the top officials of the teacher union.

\* He will visit each school, following a site-specific plan to be developed by each principal. He will ask the principals to come up with schedules designed to improve his understanding of the special nature of each facility - what its people are proud of, what they are challenged by and aspire to, and what they want him to know.

\* He will set up similar sessions with business leaders, local community advocates, governmental officials, and representatives of the media to get their views of school-related issues and priorities.

\* He will convene separate meetings with his school board and cabinet in order to share his findings about the system.

Having decided on his entry activities, Smith begins matching people in each stakeholder group with activities, sequencing the activities in a calendar, and, along the way, trying to coordinate the different sets of activities across groups. This would be maddening busy work, he thinks, were it not for the fact that the process itself was forcing him to slow down and allow important questions

to form in his mind. As he wonders about the length of each school board interview, he realizes that length will follow from content - from the questions he asks. As he formulates these questions, he thinks, What will I learn from asking this question? And more generally, what do I really need to know? Will people disclose or withhold? What do I have to do to encourage disclosure?

As Smith answers these questions and others like them, he adjusts his thinking and Entry Plan in ways that make him feel hopeful, even though the discipline required by all this frustrates him. In the end, he arrives at a set of general interview questions and returns to trying to coordinate in his calendar the sequences of activities for different stakeholder groups.

He concludes his Entry Plan design work by deciding to establish a moratorium on making changes.<sup>8</sup> His aim is in part to avoid the usual pitfall of treating entry tasks as secondary to making immediate decisions. At the same time, he asks his school board for an initial period of relative freedom from the demands of routine operational tasks. He and they will rely heavily on the members of his cabinet.

There are significant advantages to declaring a "no-changes" period that can run anywhere from one to six months, depending on the scope of your Entry Plan. This moratorium accomplishes several things: it signals to stakeholders that everyone will have their say and thus it won't pay to fight for early access, it helps you avoid jump reflex problem solving, it gives you time to build initial trust by fulfilling your commitment to learn about the place, and it forces you to articulate your proposed changes within the context of others' views, thereby lessening the chance that your ideas will be dismissed for coming "out of the blue" or being based solely on your prior experience in other, different environments.

After writing out his plan, Smith drafts an explanatory introduction that reads in part:

During the search process, I met with many of you and heard your concerns and

aspirations for raising the level of student performance.<sup>9</sup> Achieving success is a big challenge, and it will require that we all learn together. So, during the next six months, I'm asking you to join me both in exploring our past efforts - what worked and what didn't - and in looking at what others have learned. My goal is to come up with a plan for how we can raise the performance of all our students. This specific focus will be a part of my larger effort to get acquainted with each of you and understand the system itself before I make important decisions. (See attached schedule of my Entry Plan meetings.) My thanks to those of you who took part in the hiring process, and I look forward to meeting the rest of you in the months ahead!

**Step 2. Seeking feedback.** With a draft Entry Plan in hand, Smith approaches his board's chair, his cabinet, several respected principals, and other key stakeholders for their feedback. He asks them to suggest how he might improve the plan and to recommend other individuals from whom to seek feedback.

They tell Smith that his draft plan requires substantial revision. He has left out several important questions, his proposed sequence of interviewing violates norms about how things are done in the district, he needs to add several key stakeholders to his list of individual interviews and group meetings, and his proposed school visits need to be rescheduled. He discovers that, despite his efforts at openness, these central stakeholders remain confused about why he is doing an Entry Plan. Smith listens to their concerns and makes revisions. He acknowledges their confusion and offers his perspective on the benefits of an Entry Plan. After several rounds of revisions and updating his calendar with all his entry appointments, Smith is ready to move forward.

**Step 3. Getting the word out.** Smith's resolve is tested again as he begins to write a cover letter designed to provide a context and rationale for his plan. He worries that he will lose credibility if he publishes his plan but is unable to follow through. However, he remains committed to an open process in which he can listen to diverse points of view before making changes. By

going public, Smith will be making the rules of his "entry game" clear to everyone. He hopes that revealing his full plan to his stakeholders will make them feel less vulnerable and more willing to share valuable information.

So Smith musters his courage, finishes the cover letter, and attaches a copy of his plan. The week before his official start date, he sends the material to key stakeholders via email and interschool mail. At the same time, he releases his plan to the press.

**Step 4: Interviews and site visits.** Smith knows that the key to entry planning is the systematic collection of good information that will enable him to understand his new organization from the inside out. He has learned from hard experience that, while stakeholders may yearn for their advice to be followed with quick action, they expect to be heard and may grow rebellious or subversive if their expectations are ignored. Smith knows that he must not only listen but be seen to listen, which is one of the chief benefits of carefully planned school and community visits that go beyond "meet and greet."

Throughout his data-gathering activity, Smith works from a list of questions that fall into four broad categories:

- \* What questions. Smith knows that he will be held accountable for aligning organizational output with what stakeholders think the district should be doing.

- \* How questions. Successful implementation requires Smith to know how the organization really works.

- \* People questions. Smith needs to understand what his people care about in order to lead them effectively.

- \* Leadership questions. Smith needs to know how past leaders were perceived, as well as what current expectations are for his performance and for that of his leadership team.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of each meeting, Smith asks if there are any important questions that he has failed to ask. He also asks what he should read to get a fuller understanding of the district.

Soon Smith finds that his structured interviews, site visits, and community outreach activities have given him new insights into and information about the issues facing the district. In fact, the patterns in the responses help him to predict where his best chances lie to build a consensus around action.

Smith learns, however, that his efforts are going to raise as many questions as they answer. He has now heard several conflicting versions of the history of student performance, opposing explanations for the unsatisfactory outcomes, and sharply differing prescriptions for how to fix the problem. And all of the alternative views seem quite convincing. He is confused by this conflicting information, but he is not shocked the way he would have been earlier in his career, when he was first encountering the incredible complexity of organizational life. Indeed, given his experience, he would have been far more surprised if everyone had told him more or less the same story. Although Smith finds his confusion uncomfortable, he has developed the internal muscle to use it as a resource for questioning his own assumptions.

For example, during the closed-door interviews he discovered that his school board was fragmented and fractious - the exact opposite of how they had acted when he was unanimously chosen for the job. Torn between his old and new information, Smith struggles to reset his assumptions about individual board members. He also reconsiders his plan to initiate a fast-track start with the board's agenda. First, he will need to address team building. He believes that resetting his assumptions, however painful, will pay off in better decisions. Indeed, he knows from immediate feedback that the very interviews that generated his confusion also generated an initial measure of trust from stakeholders throughout the district.

**Step 5. Convening sense-making meetings.** At this point, Smith pauses to consider the pros and cons of continuing on to this fifth step. He knows several other superintendents who were pleased that they had stopped after Step 4 because they felt they had learned what they needed to

improve their personal decision making and action agendas. He also knows that implementing this final step requires the courage and accompanying skill to include others in making sense of the conflicting information, rather than keeping unilateral control.

Despite the risks, Smith believes that a successful entry depends not only on a new administrator's commitment to the organization, but also on the recommitment of key stakeholders to new ways of thinking about shared problems. And he is determined to use the "golden hour" of entry to establish the leadership approach that he will continue to employ whenever confusion pulls him up short. So Smith decides to hold two sense-making meetings - he calls them feedback sessions. The first will be with his cabinet and the second with his board. He knows that, paradoxically, open exchange and joint sense-making depend on highly structured logistics, so he begins his cabinet meeting with an introduction that sets out the meeting's purpose, procedures, time period, and decision-making process. He tells the group:

In just a moment, I'm going to present my key findings about student performance from my interviews and school visits. The purpose of today's meeting is to begin figuring out together what this information means and what to do about it. We've got two hours today, so we'll only get started. Assuming that you find the information as confusing as I do, we'll spend perhaps half of our time figuring out next steps. Should we not reach consensus on the meaning of the data or next steps, you can count on me to make decisions and move us forward.

Smith reports that the board, cabinet, principals, and teachers uniformly agree that the district's highest priority should be improving student performance, but beyond that there is no consensus. Using a chart, he presents the five most frequently proposed theories for why the problem persists, along with the seven most prevalent ideas about how

to address the problem. While maintaining the individual confidentiality of his interviewees, Smith identifies the conflicts that exist between stakeholder groups. He then reports that the responses from within the cabinet mirror the conflicting results from the district as a whole.

In the exchange that follows Smith's presentation, he asserts his own confusion (tied to the data that occasioned it) and listens reflectively to differing views. He anchors himself amidst a vigorous debate by continuously coming back to this question: What do we know that will allow us to decide which of these explanations makes the most sense? Gradually, cabinet members concede that the data are "thin." That is, good evidence for supporting one explanation over another does not exist. With reluctance and some frustration, individual cabinet members acknowledge the mess. "It's a shame how little we really know," says an assistant superintendent with a sigh. And turning to Smith, he continues, "So what's the answer?"

Smith responds:

I wish I did have an answer. I'd love to rescue all of us from this mess. But I don't know the answer, really. I'm confused, as I think many of you are. At the same time, I know that confusion does not have to incapacitate me - or you. We can figure this out together. Actually, we have to figure it out together because it's not a problem that has an easy answer. Answering it will require that we think together in new ways and come up with new solutions.

On that note, Smith asks the cabinet to take on the task of figuring out what to do with "this confusing mess." Cabinet members feel strongly that Smith should make his feedback presentation not only to the board but also to the teacher union executive board and to the principals, so that those groups can discover "our true state of ignorance," as one member puts it.

From the ensuing exchange, a rough draft of inquiry and action steps emerges. Smith will appoint a Student Performance Group, made up of cabinet members, principals, and union leaders. The group will have the following charge:

\* Define the data needed to make judgments about the competing theories and action items.

\* Plan how to gather that data and make data-collection assignments.

\* Schedule additional meetings to examine the relationship between the data and the competing hypotheses - and then recommend next steps.

\* Present the results and recommendations to a combined meeting of the board, the cabinet, the principals, and the executive board of the teacher union.

Smith then adjourns the two-hour meeting.

Organizations are wickedly complex.<sup>11</sup>

Developing a common understanding of this reality in a particular situation can produce both a "we're-all-in-this-together" attitude and a widespread belief that finding answers to baffling problems requires collective learning - a process that begins with stakeholders rethinking their own assumptions and ends with disciplined planning to ensure that new ways of thinking are translated into new behaviors. By defining and managing this process, Smith takes on the leadership role of orchestrating and enhancing the district's capacity for transforming itself.

## **STARTING OUT RIGHT**

To be sure, writing and executing an Entry Plan can feel like a scary way to begin a new job. Overburdened new administrators think they don't have the time; open discussions of confusion often trigger deep-seated fears of losing control; Entry Plans call for skills that new administrators may lack; and Entry Plans can violate usual norms of entry - not to mention undercutting conventional views about what it means to be a leader. These risks loom large for all administrators, but they can be particularly daunting for first-timers, who often become worn out, overwhelmed, and preoccupied with control and survival.

We don't wish to minimize these complexities. Even when Step 5 is skipped, doing an Entry Plan can be hard, time-

consuming, and tedious, and it requires considerable skill. Moreover, in some situations an Entry Plan might be so counter-cultural that it would be difficult to pull it off, while in other situations, such as a crisis, an Entry Plan might best be avoided, abbreviated, or telescoped into a much smaller, faster effort. Even at its best, entry planning is no panacea. No matter how well versed in this methodology, anyone who takes up a new leadership position must still confront a dauntingly complex swirl of high hopes, conflicting demands, and bewildering information.

However, our work with hundreds of new principals and superintendents convinces us that the benefits of an Entry Plan far outweigh the costs.<sup>12</sup> When carefully tailored to the particulars of organizational culture and conditions, Entry Plans provide a sensible alternative to the haphazard and troubled entries that most of us have witnessed (and some of us have experienced).

An Entry Plan approach has the potential to position new leaders for success right from the start. It offers a number of benefits:

\* An Entry Plan can enable new leaders to experience the confusion that naturally accompanies the start of a new job and to use that healthy confusion as a resource for personal and organizational learning.

\* It can spark an organizational self-examination - something that all organizations periodically require - at a time when the passing of the baton to a new leader makes such an assessment both legitimate and possible.

\* It can help a new leader gain knowledge, trust, and credibility by joining with other stakeholders in an open process for sizing up the state of the organization and engaging in the collective development and implementation of plans for change.

\* And it can enable a new leader to establish an approach to leadership that is both top-down and bottom-up - and designed to make progress in settings marked by high levels of confusion. Such an approach to leadership works during entry, but, equally important, it has continuing value in helping administrators cope with such complex



and confusing challenges as how to devise programs that educate all children to high standards.

Though they like to pretend otherwise, most new leaders find themselves frequently

flummoxed about how to start. Armed with confusion and their Entry Plans, they can start out right and position themselves for the continuing challenge of leading and learning in a fast-paced, demanding, and confusing world.

#### [Reference]

1. We use "stakeholders" as shorthand to include members of the staff, elected and appointed officials, parents, and anyone else with a stake in the organization.

2. A number of books have been written about the process of entry, starting with Barry Jentz et al., eds., *Entry: The Hiring, Start-Up, and Supervision of Administrators* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); it has been reprinted by Leadership & Learning, Inc., and is available from [www.entrybook.com](http://www.entrybook.com). This volume is the wellspring of many of the ideas contained in this article, but it does not examine entry through the lens of confusion.

Similarly, a number of other books on entry have been published recently, and none of them use the lens of confusion or explore the attendant emotional upheaval created by the process of entry. These books include John Carbarro, *The Dynamics of Taking Charge* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1987); Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins, *Right from the Start* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999); Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003); and Thomas J. Neff and James M. Citrin, *You're in Charge - Now What?* (New York: Crown Business, 2005). These books examine the process of learning during entry, as well as other related facets of beginning a new job, such as securing early wins and preparing yourself personally for the strains of transition.

3. Barry C. Jentz and Jerome T. Murphy, "Embracing Confusion: What Leaders Do When They Don't Know What to Do," *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 2005, pp. 358-66. This article is available on the PDK website at [www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k\\_v86/k0501jen.htm](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k_v86/k0501jen.htm)

4. For additional views of common traps and challenges new leaders face, see Ciampa and Watkins, *op. cit.*; Watkins, *op. cit.*; and Neff and Citrin, *op. cit.*

5. Since the late 1970s, Jentz has consulted widely with administrators beginning new jobs. For several case stories written by practitioners and for self-help exercises in entry planning, see Jentz et al., *op. cit.* This volume spells out in great detail how (and why) to design, write, and execute an EntryPlan. Moreover, we owe special thanks to Dan Cheever for his chapter in the book that influenced the writing of this section of the article.

6. Between the time you are hired and your official start date, you will engage in a number of important activities beyond working on your EntryPlan. These activities include doing in-depth research on the system, reading the literature on entry, and consulting with trusted colleagues. In this article, we focus exclusively on entry planning.

7. Ideally, your EntryPlan should be made public right before you officially begin. Of course, the timing and duration of the entire process when you release your plan, when you start your data collection, and how long your entry period will be - will depend on your particular situation. For example, in a school setting, if you were to start on August 1, you would quite likely delay your main data collection until after the teachers and administrators have all returned from their summer break.

8. Of course, when you establish a "no-changes" moratorium, you should be prepared to make certain exceptions, such as a new procedure for meeting with your cabinet regularly. You may even wish to modify your moratorium, as long as you are public about your reasons, in order to allow for picking some "low-hanging fruit" - changes that are commonly desired by stakeholders and easy to make. And, of course, emergency situations might cause you to depart from a moratorium or not declare one at all.

9. In this example, stakeholders agree about priorities, but typically that is not the case. When priorities differ, an EntryPlan provides a framework for exploring the range and depth of the differences and for gauging where a consensus might emerge. This is all done prior to making decisions about priorities or asking others to join in doing so.

10. For a list of stakeholders from whom you may consider collecting data and for ideas about what structures and questions to use, see Jentz et al., *op. cit.*; Watkins, *op. cit.*; and Neff and Citrin, *op. cit.*

11. For a gut-level encounter with organizational complexity and a real-life rationale for why entry planning is so important, see Paul Kelleher, "A Bad Beginning as Principal," in Jentz et al., pp. 75-86. Rarely has a starting administrator so candidly recorded his "blindness" to organizational complexity. Kelleher vividly shows how what appears to be simple and innocuous organizational practice is in fact rooted in complexity that can pull a new administrator down. We owe special thanks to Kelleher for his help, not only with entry planning, but also with our current thinking about confusion and leadership.

12. In addition to our direct work with superintendents, principals, and many other practitioners, since the publication of *Entry* in 1982, we've been pleasantly surprised by the volume of anecdotes we continue to hear about the power and value of entry planning.

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