

# Becoming Principal of Swanson Middle School: Nurturing the Legacy of Excellence



**Renee Harber**  
Principal,  
Swanson Middle School  
5800 Washington Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22205  
703-228-5505  
[renee.harber@apsva.us](mailto:renee.harber@apsva.us)

This entry plan provides direction and structure for the Swanson Middle school community during the transition in leadership. Swanson embodies a legacy of excellence spanning over 75 years, grounded in the core principles of scholarship, service and spirit.

My transition into the role of principal at Swanson Middle School will be guided by the following essential questions:

- In what ways can I respect and build upon the rich culture of the Swanson community, celebrating its diversity and talents?
- How may I best encourage and support Swanson's strong instructional legacy, providing opportunity for all students' success?
- What should I do to foster collaborative relationships with all stakeholders, and build stronger partnerships?

This plan highlights three phases as the new principal of Swanson Middle School. Continued success in this work will be guided by the APS Strategic Plan, complimented by the 3-5 Year Action Plan, enveloped in trust, transparency and respect.

- The trust built will center on our most important asset: meeting the whole needs of our students.
- Transparency of data and feedback will provide us the ability to make informed, valid decisions regarding our instructional work.
- Respect for everyone's role and their experiences will positively impact the work we do for our students.

It will be key to develop the norms and expectations for building relationships with all stakeholders to accomplish our work ahead. It is essential to provide leadership and support to our staff, especially in the content of professional learning, as we continue to address instructional needs of our expanding student population, through targeted interventions, culturally sensitive, whole-child approaches. Collaborative conversations with countywide staff and PLC /CLT times will intertwine targeted supports to ensure teachers and staff continue to provide the level of instruction synonymous with Swanson's legacy of excellence.

The ultimate goal of this entry plan will be to ensure that all our students are provided the opportunity to learn and grow in an enriching and inclusive instructional environment.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Renee Harber' in a cursive script.

## Detailed Entry Plan Activities by Constituency Group

Group	Initial Entry: July – August 2017	Transition Period: Sept - October 2017	Ongoing Work: October 2017 - June 2018
<b>Administration &amp; Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send an e-mail to staff announcing new role as principal</li> <li>• Encourage staff to visit over the summer</li> <li>• Meet with 12 month employees (Assistant principal, office staff, custodians, ITC)</li> <li>• Meet with instructional leadership team to review data and plan for upcoming school year</li> <li>• Maintain open door policy</li> <li>• Welcome Back to School Letter to Staff</li> <li>• Set foundational approach for the year's work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with new teachers and staff</li> <li>• Meet with Instructional Leadership Team</li> <li>• Establish Professional Learning approach to allow for greater choice among staff.</li> <li>• Meet with grade level teams, special education teachers, teacher assistants, continuing contract and probationary teachers, ESOL/HILT teachers, reading teachers, Specialists, Math coaches, Resource Teacher for the Gifted</li> <li>• Meet with support staff including Extended Day and Cafeteria Manager</li> <li>• Back to School</li> <li>• Attend PLC meetings</li> <li>• Maintain open communication through weekly staff memo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct classroom observations, walk-throughs and follow-up meetings with staff</li> <li>• Provide targeted professional learning opportunities</li> <li>• Facilitate meetings with Administrative Team, staff, Instructional Leadership Team</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Document Review for all phases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APS Strategic Plan</li> <li>• APS 3-5 Year Action Plan</li> <li>• School/PTA/APS calendar</li> <li>• Current and Past School Management Plans and Assessments</li> <li>• School Mission and Vision Statement</li> <li>• School Assessment Data (SRI, WIDA ACCESS, SOLs)</li> <li>• Local School Report Card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/Staff /Student Satisfaction Survey Results</li> <li>• School Website</li> <li>• Staff Handbook</li> <li>• Student Handbook</li> <li>• Program of Studies</li> <li>• Staff Evaluations and Document Logs/ SMART Goals</li> <li>• Budget and Financial Reports</li> <li>• PTA Meeting Minutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Files</li> <li>• PLC minutes</li> <li>• School Safety Audit</li> <li>• Student Academic and transition plans</li> <li>• Administrative Council Meeting Minutes</li> <li>• School Master Schedule</li> <li>• Individual Education Plans</li> <li>• 504 Plans</li> <li>• Gifted Accommodations</li> </ul>
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support summer transition and Open House activities.</li> <li>• Provide open office hour dates for students to stop in and meet me.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in learning activities in all classrooms</li> <li>• Visit Specialty and general STAR classrooms</li> <li>• Regular visits of instructional settings</li> <li>• Establish a monthly Town Hall forum in collaboration with SGA for students to share feedback and concerns</li> <li>• Capitalize on lunch and other settings to informally speak with students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be visible in all aspects of student life</li> <li>• Regularly celebrate student achievement and accomplishment</li> </ul>

<b>Parents / Community Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send introductory letter to parents and community with invitation to visit.</li> <li>• Arrange informal “Chat and Chew” socialization event to meet parents and community members.</li> <li>• Review feedback data from School Climate surveys detailing concerns and expectations.</li> <li>• Send introductory communications to civic organizations.</li> <li>• Utilize social media outlets (i.e. Twitter) to promote excellence achieved the recent year and initiatives moving forward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with PTA Executive Board to establish protocols and norms for my partnership with the PTA.</li> <li>• Attend civic association meetings and events when able.</li> <li>• Identify and reach out to community partners who offer skills, services and supports which can strengthen instructional and social initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase Strategic, Resource and Individual volunteers and partnerships</li> <li>• Attend community and civic events and activities when able</li> </ul>
<b>Central Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with middle school principals’ group to establish relationships and transitional support.</li> <li>• Connect with Department of Instruction staff to review any ongoing work, as well as discuss ideas and professional learning opportunities for instructional and support staff.</li> <li>• Review with Facilities any issues or action items regarding capacity issues for upcoming school year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with central office staff regarding professional learning and other instructional resources to support staff</li> <li>• Build collaborative conversations regarding personalized learning platform in effort to build strong digital citizenship and strengthen instructional approach for all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage staff participation in monthly countywide and professional learning opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Superintendent and Executive Leadership Team (ELT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish relationships and lines of communication to support school</li> <li>• Attend Administrative Conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend Administrative Council and Middle School Principal meetings</li> <li>• Capitalize on mentor opportunities for new principals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain open dialogue and discussions regarding strengths and challenges of the school</li> </ul>
<b>Feeder Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with feeder school’s leadership teams at Administrative Conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support academic planning for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students by providing information sessions on APS options.</li> <li>• Work with feeder high schools, HB and Arlington Career Center/Arlington Tech in preparing transition plans for rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit elementary feeder schools to share vision of middle school opportunities</li> <li>• Maintain open communication with schools’ leadership regarding school and community needs and concerns</li> </ul>

