

I am honored to be the new Head of School at Vassal Lane Upper School. It is a tremendous opportunity to join this community, and I am looking forward to the arrival of the school year and the return of the typical middle school energy in our classrooms and hallways.

I am grateful to come into VLUS after the hard work put in by the team of retired professionals who took over the leadership of the school last year. Barbara Boyle, Barry McNulty and Martha Mosman showed true dedication to the Cambridge Public Schools by coming back to work after their successful careers had ended. Staff, students and families were lucky to have them at the helm, and I have benefitted from my conversations with them and the information they gave me as I started my transition last spring.

In addition to the work of these three administrators, it is clear that the last year was successful, in part, due to the work put in by our two talented content coaches--Sarah Foleno and Matt Dunkel. Matt and Sarah have shown themselves to be invaluable leaders of the school and their work, in collaboration with our Assistant Principal Tanya Benzan, our guidance counselor Matt Sadowski and the full VLUS faculty has helped make the transition into the coming school year a smooth one.

My personal transition into the VLUS community is centered around developing a strong sense of cohesion first within our school and then with the families of VLUS and the greater community. To accomplish this, I have established three interconnected goals. My first goal is to establish and nurture positive and productive relationships with the members of the VLUS community in order to better understand the history, norms, values and traditions of the school. From there, I seek to identify strengths and areas of growth for VLUS. Based on the information and data I collect, I will develop an action plan to address some of our most pressing needs. I began taking on this work this summer and look forward to continuing that momentum into the start of the school year.

I am excited about this work and about developing connections with staff, students and parents as we build upon the strengths of this school and work together to make meaningful and important improvements. **As our Vision Statement says: "We become better together."**

Goals:

Goal 1: Establish and nurture positive and productive relationships with the members of the VLUS community in order to better understand the history, norms, values and traditions of the school



Goal 2: Identify strengths and areas of growth for VLUS



Goal 3: Develop an action plan to address most pressing needs based on data collected

Process

Interviews : Over the summer and into the start of the school year, I am available to meet with you to discuss your perspective of the school and what key steps need to be taken moving forward.

- Tell me a little bit about you--how did you come to VLUS, what keeps you here?
- There is a lot that goes well at this school--from your lens, what are three of those strengths?
- Room to grow: what changes, if implemented, would make this a more successful school?

Observations: The purpose of these observations is to identify both patterns of instructional strength and the culture of learning that exists in the building. Do we have common expectations? Do we use common language?

Data Analysis and Systems Review: A comprehensive review of plans, documents and reports that either impact VLUS or reflect our past work. These include:

- Budget documents
- SIPs
- Student handbook
- Achievement data--state, local

Facilities: A comprehensive review of the physical plant, including all instructional spaces, meeting/small group spaces, common areas and shared locations with the Tobin. In addition, a review of:

- Emergency plans
- Summer work and timelines
- Pending building challenges
- Safety and security procedures

Action Steps

Goal 1: Establish and nurture positive and productive relationships with the members of the VLUS community in order to better understand the history, norms, values and traditions of the school	
Action	Timeline
<u>VLUS Staff</u>	
Meet with school leadership, teachers, and staff	Spring 2016--completed
Plan for scope of building-based PD, with a focus on team building and shared ownership	August 2016-ongoing
<u>Students</u>	
Send Welcome Back Letter to students/families	August 2016
Schedule grade-level assemblies for first days of school to welcome students and to re-set norms/expectations	August 2016
Supervise and observe students in hallways, entrances/exits, lunches, etc.	September 2016-ongoing
Conduct informal interviews with students to gain their perspective on VLUS	September-October 2016
<u>Parents/Community Members</u>	
Communicate with parents with focus on introduction and community building	July 2016-ongoing
Schedule and hold parent forums	July 2016--completed
Meet with FOVLUS leadership	August 2016--completed
Establish School Council meeting calendar and process for School Council member elections	September 2016
<u>Central Office</u>	
Meet with central office staff including Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and other relevant directors, coordinators, etc.	August 2016-ongoing
Meet with Heads of Upper Schools	July/August 2016--completed

Goal 2: Identify strengths and areas of growth for VLUS

Action	Timeline
Assess internal and external student achievement data (e.g., VLUS data, district-based assessments, student work, MCAS/PARCC scores, etc.)	Fall 2016
Observe classrooms	September 2016-ongoing
Review budget from FY16 and examine budget priorities for FY17	July-August 2016--completed
Assess staff input from interviews as well as staff input collected via ILT process during the 15-16 SY	June-ongoing--completed
Present data collected from the action steps of Goal 1	November 2016

Goal 3: Develop an action plan to address most pressing needs based on data collected

Action	Timeline
Analyze the data for common themes and concerns	July-ongoing
Address systems issues that have potential impact on school opening	July-August 2016
Communicate summer changes to faculty	August 2016
Meet with school-based leadership teams to prioritize remaining concerns/challenges and develop action plan to address them	November 2016-June 2017