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Karen D. Clarke



An 'A-rated' District
"We are committed to the success of every student!"

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November 10, 2020

Dear Chairman Roy and Members of the School Board,

After much deliberation, I am writing to inform you that I will be stepping down from my position as Superintendent of Alachua County Public Schools effective June 30, 2021. Although it did not come easily, I have made this decision after a great deal of thought and reflection.

I want to express my deep appreciation for the opportunity to serve the district's students, families, and staff. It has been an inspiration to work with so many talented, hard-working people, both inside and outside the district, who are dedicated to the success of this community's children. I am particularly honored to have led this amazing school district during challenges that have included Hurricane Irma and the COVID pandemic.

We have a number of accomplishments to celebrate over the last 3 ½ years, including:

- The district, once again, received an "A" rating after 4 years.
- The district's graduation rate increased to an all-time high of 88.5%.
- The African American graduation rate increased from 68.3% to an all-time high of 79.9%.
- Voters approved the Half-Cent for Schools sales tax initiative, resulting in an estimated \$240 million in needed facilities funding for the district over the next twelve years. As you know, those revenues are already having a significant impact on the quality of learning environments throughout the district.
- Voters renewed the One Mill initiative, which helps to fund the salaries of more than 300 teachers and allows the district to maintain vital personnel, programs, and technology to benefit students.
- We implemented a new health magnet program at Eastside High School and an Agribusiness magnet at Hawthorne Middle/High School.
- We had a record number of students earning national career certifications, more than 2000 in 2019.
- We developed and implemented a number of equity initiatives, including the AVID and AP Capstone programs, universal gifted screening, and the magnet lottery.
- According to the Florida Department of Education, the district's ranking for teacher salaries rose from 55th to 21st in the state within the last two years.

To continue the district's progress, many critical decisions must be made and implemented. Full School Board support will be essential, and I believe that the new board should have the opportunity to select a superintendent of their choice.

I have made the announcement at this time so that the Board will have the transitional time needed for board planning and community engagement in its selection of new leadership.

I am honored to have spent nearly 29 years as an educator with Alachua County Public Schools and am very proud to have led this wonderful district for the past 3 ½ years. I am sure that with the support of the Board, the staff, and the entire community, this district will continue to achieve great things.

Sincerely,

Karen Clarke
Superintendent