

Superintendent announces plan to step down next summer

After leading Alachua County Public Schools since the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, Superintendent Karen Clarke has announced that she plans to step down from her position effective June 30 of 2021.



In a letter to the Board members, Clarke expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to serve the district's students, families and staff, particularly during such challenges as Hurricane Irma and the COVID pandemic.

She also highlighted a number of accomplishments during her tenure. Those include: the district raising its state grade to an 'A' for the first time in four years; an overall graduation rate increase from 83% to 88% and an increase from 68% to 79.9% for African American students, both of which were all-time highs; passage of the Half Cent for Schools initiative, which is already funding massive facilities improvement projects; the recent renewal by voters of the One Mill, which currently helps pay the salaries of more than 300 local teachers, is the primary source of technology funding and guarantees a nurse in every school; an increase in the district's average teacher salary from 55th in the state to 21st; new career-tech programs at Eastside High and Hawthorne Middle/High School; a record number of students earning national career certification, and; a number of equity initiatives, including the AVID and AP Capstone programs, universal gifted screening and a magnet lottery.

Clarke said the decision to step down was not an easy one, but she believes the new school board, which will be in place on November 17, should have the opportunity to select a new Superintendent. She also wanted to give the School Board time to plan for a Superintendent search. This is especially critical during a time in which the district is addressing major issues such as COVID-19 and rezoning for the new Elementary School I.

"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," wrote Clarke in her letter to board members. "I am sure that with the support of the Board, the staff and the entire community, this district will continue to achieve great things."

The Superintendent's letter to the School Board can be found [here](#).

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