

Dear Staff,

As we come to the end of another school year together, I wanted to inform you that I have decided to retire effective February 26, 2021. It has truly been an exciting time to lead as your Superintendent, deciding to retire was a very difficult decision. I cannot help but consider that every journey, no matter the ups and downs we may encounter thereon, always has an end (part of the journey is the end). Reflecting upon my journey as a public-school educator has led me to appreciate more deeply our profession, but especially the many students, colleagues, and friends who I have met along the way. I wanted to take the time to again say thank you for working tirelessly to further our mission: providing a high-quality education for *all* students.

Some of the accomplishments we achieved together include but not limited to:

- Increasing the district grade from a “C” to a “B” in 2017-18, which was maintained consecutively for 2018-2019.
- Increasing the graduation rate from 69.4% to 81.2%.
- Increasing 14 traditional high school graduation rates to 88.8%.
- Increasing the graduation rate among students with disabilities from 42.3% to 77.2%; ELL students from 54.3% to 66.6%; and African Americans students from 61.4% to 78.7%.
- Decreasing the number of low-performing schools from 58 to 21.
- Sustaining two consecutive years with no “F” rated schools.
- Eliminating over 110 miscellaneous, district-imposed tests.
- Rebranding the School District to promote who we are, what we stand for, and our mission.
- Creating and implementing innovative programs including, but not limited to Students With Disabilities (SWD) Transition Programs, Student Behavior Plans, and the Bus Safety Radio.
- Opening the Gibbons Street Pre-School Center, which is the first districtwide Pre-School.
- Creating and partnering with Polk State College to launch the ELITE (Establishing Leadership, in Teacher Education) program for students to earn A.A. degrees.
- Students who complete the ELITE program agree to return to Polk County Public Schools to begin their careers as educators in elementary education.
- Creating and partnering with Polk County Sheriff, Grady Judd, to implement the School Guardian program, which was developed in response to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Act for placing armed personnel in all schools.
- Providing innovative opportunities for teachers and staff to advance their educational opportunities with local colleges.
- Opening the first community partnership school with support of wraparound services for the school and community.
- Working with citizens, staff, and business leaders to successfully promote the renewal of the .5 cent sales tax.

Because of our efforts, together we were able to accomplish not only the accomplishments listed above, but many more. When times were tough, we dug in, pulled together as a team and emerged as one. *We Did It, thank you!*

Jackie

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jackie', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the bottom left.