

An Open Letter to the Lee County Community from Superintendent Bernier

Dear School District of Lee County Employees and Lee County Community Members,

I am honored and appreciative of the opportunity to lead the School District of Lee County! Collaboration will be essential to our success in achieving our vision of being a world class school system. Our work together requires an unwavering commitment to our students, making their achievement our top priority, and transforming our approach to ensure that all of our students are both college and career ready. Supporting and developing our greatest asset, our children, will not only ensure their individual success, but the success of our community - both now and for future generations to come.

We cannot do this work alone. Our school district and community must work in partnership if we are to fulfill our mission of ensuring that each student achieves his/her highest personal potential. We must commit to creating a school system that prioritizes high achievement, student success, and preparing all students to be productive citizens. Our students deserve this commitment, as do our educators, support professionals, and community. When I was young, my parents instilled within me the value of education. When we became a single parent household, my mother shouldered the burden to raise me, but relied on educators, faith leaders, neighbors, and coaches to assist me in becoming the man I am today. Those supportive adult relationships created a circle of safety and guided me on a pathway to success. I have been blessed with the privilege to provide my children with those same systems of support. I believe that every child should have the opportunity to dream, explore, and pursue whatever they want to become in life. Providing our children access to a high-quality education and caring adults can produce life-changing outcomes.

This entry plan will serve as a foundation for reaching those outcomes, allow for our community's collective voices to be heard, capitalize on the momentum already established, and influence the path forward so that our students will flourish. The goal of this entry strategy is to listen, learn, and then plan in order to lead our students and community to even greater success. The listening phase is already underway. It began

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immediately following my selection by the School Board on February 1, 2022. As listening informs my learning, I will move to leading and implementation.

During the interview process, I was clear that I would not arrive in Lee County with a predetermined plan of implementation. Instead, I expressed a need to work together with a variety of stakeholders to address the needs of our students and diverse community. As I continue to meet with internal and external stakeholders, those conversations will deepen my understanding of Lee County. To create open dialogue, my questions are open ended and include:

- How are the students performing and are they prepared to be productive citizens?
- How do we define and measure success, as a community and school system?
- What are our strengths as a school system and community? How do we know?
- What challenges must be addressed to realize our vision as a world class school system?
- What are some areas that we should seek to improve (short- and long-term)? Why?

While the plan is a guide for my entry to Lee County, it must remain flexible and aligned to the needs of the students and stakeholders of our school district. The students of Lee County deserve a world class education; and as a community, we have a responsibility to provide this opportunity for all children. This plan is intended to chart the path from my first days of service to my first evaluation in November 2022, and to provide accountability to the School Board and the community. I am excited to serve the students, families, and staff of Lee County; and I look forward to meeting you soon.

Respectfully,

Christopher S. Bernier, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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Aligned Core Values

This plan is grounded in my belief that all students must be afforded the opportunity to grow academically, socially, and emotionally, developing the skills necessary to reach their fullest potential, and that all children deserve to be celebrated, nurtured, loved, and valued as they are engaged in rigorous and quality instruction. As parents, educators, leaders, and community members, we must approach this work from a shared set of beliefs and values that direct our personal, organizational, and professional behavior. The core values of EnVision 2030, the District's Strategic Plan, were the primary reasons for my application to be your superintendent. These core values must be embedded in our work as living examples to our students.

Belief in Students

Students are the purpose and reason for our work. Student success is our civic responsibility and can never be compromised. Therefore, we must hold to the core belief that all children can be successful, and all means all. We must create and commit to equitable and exceptional instructional practices that meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of every learner in our care.

Excellence

Excellence should be the standard for our work. We must seek to exceed expectations and drive excellence to benefit our students. We must commit to continuous improvement of student, educator, and administrator experiences and environments. The relentless pursuit of excellence requires that we measure our outcomes, transparently share information, and hold each other accountable.

Integrity

Integrity is the act of behaving honorably, even when no one is watching. Integrity is reliably doing the right thing and utilizing honesty, honor, and truthfulness. This value should extend to every personal and professional interaction and area of our work. Integrity is non-negotiable.

High Expectations

Setting high expectations for our students and employees is critical to our success, as a school system and community—we are inextricably linked. We all must understand that high expectations improve students' academic achievement and well-being. Setting high expectations for our teachers, parents, and peers effect students' self-esteem, feelings of self-efficacy, and their academic motivation.

Accountability

Accountability means taking ownership of the results of our work, actions, and outcomes. As school and community leaders, we must accept the responsibility of any shortcoming and give honest and transparent credit where it is due.

Professionalism

Professionalism involves being competent and continuously developing your expertise. At every stage of a career, professionals must strive to master their craft and keep adding to what they know. Professionals are competent, conscientious, appropriate, and confident. Professionals behave with integrity and respect while adhering to the highest standards of conduct.



My Commitment to Lee County

My commitment to the School District of Lee County is to enter the District by listening, learning, and leading. With our students at the center of our work and in alignment with our core values, the goals of the entry plan are as follows:

Community Engagement

Create initial and ongoing community engagement opportunities for stakeholders' voices to assist in understanding the story and culture of our District, schools, and central office, informing the decision-making process, and determining the needs for both immediate and long-term outcomes.

Learning and Workplace Environment

Identify opportunities to build support and structures for learning and workplace environments so they are safe, equitable, compassionate, positive, and result in increased educational outcomes and employee retention.

Educational Excellence

Determine and implement strategies which demonstrate alignment, measurable outcomes, and a commitment to the pursuit of student achievement, educational excellence, efficient and responsible use of public funds, and a culture of continuous improvement

Community Engagement

- 1.1** Meeting individually with all board members to understand personal perspectives, goals, and desired outcomes
- 1.2** Establishing cadence for board member one-on-one meetings, updates, and formal and informal communication
- 1.3** Meeting with Board Advisory Committees including the Construction Advisory Committee, Continuous Systemic Improvement Advisory Committee, Curriculum Advisory Committee, Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee, and Finance Advisory Committee, and District Advisory Committee
- 1.4** Meeting with the Board's Audit Committee and the Independent Sales Surtax Oversight Committee



- 1.5 Touring all district operational and school facilities
- 1.6 Attending high school graduation ceremonies
- 1.7 Hosting three (3) “Leadership Dialogues” with district and school leaders
- 1.8 Hosting three (3) “Neighborhood Dialogues” to engage parents, guardians, caregivers, and neighborhood organizations
- 1.9 Hosting three (3) “Listening Dialogues” with teachers, support professionals, and employees
- 1.10 Hosting three (3) “Town Halls” to engage the faith-based, civils rights, non-profits, education, and business communities
- 1.11 Meeting and setting open engagement opportunities with elected officials from the federal, state, and local offices

Learning and Workplace Environment

- 2.1 Requesting and supporting Board opportunities to deepen our understanding and alignment of our governance model, inclusive of the new superintendent
- 2.2 Establishing a Superintendent’s Student Advisory Team comprised of student leaders to address student concerns and add student voice to inform decisions
- 2.3 Infusing our core values into the actions and deeds of all Cabinet members and establishing a recognition program for employees who exemplify them in service to our students and District
- 2.4 Forming teacher, support staff, and principal advisory committees to meet quarterly and communicate about issues related to student achievement, safety, and climate/morale
- 2.5 Reviewing Human Resources’ information and historical data related to vacancies, recruitment, retention, and work environments to determine necessary strategies to support our classrooms and workforce
- 2.6 Assessing the effectiveness of recruitment, hiring, support, and retention practices for instructional and administrative personnel



- 2.7 Assessing educator demographics in comparison to student demographic profiles to determine whether barriers exist in recruiting and retaining highly qualified and diverse instructional personnel
- 2.8 Reviewing discipline data to determine the number of serious violations and safety-related incidents and to determine the degree of disproportionality based on race, gender, and/or instructional setting
- 2.9 Meeting with security leadership, principals, and community members to assess efforts to maintain safe environments in schools and central office facilities

Educational Excellence

- 3.1 Meeting with principals at schools to listen and learn
- 3.2 Conducting a Superintendent 360 Assessment to establish a baseline of perception and performance
- 3.3 Setting collaborative and measurable annual Superintendent goals and outcomes with the School Board
- 3.4 Requesting Board work session(s) concerning initiatives, timelines, actions, measurable outcomes, and, if determined, make any necessary revisions for EnVision 2030, the District's Strategic Plan
- 3.5 Establishing effective protocols and organizational structures for the supervision and accountability of school and district leaders
- 3.6 Conducting learning walks in classrooms and other educational spaces to ascertain the quality of daily instruction, student engagement, authentic and rigorous work, innovative practices, and use of educational technology

- 3.7 Examining the data and evidence regarding student achievement outcomes (proficiency, achievement gaps, graduation rates) and studying the initiatives designed to support student learning and achievement, including the degree of disproportionality based on race, gender, socioeconomics, and English Language Learner (ELL) and/or Exceptional Student Education (ESE) designation
- 3.8 Conducting a review of annual school improvement plans for alignment to EnVision 2030, the District’s Strategic Plan
- 3.9 Examining the effectiveness of the student data management and learning management systems to understand the degree to which our management systems support and inform teaching and learning
- 3.10 Analyzing school and division data and key statistics to determine the District’s rankings related to various state and national rankings that measure how well schools and divisions are performing
- 3.11 Reviewing information and data regarding budget, financial, and procurement processes to ensure compliance, fiscal stewardship, and appropriate funding of schools
- 3.12 Reviewing operational programs and practices related to Student Enrollment/School Choice, Communications, Food Service, Transportation, Technology, and Facilities and Construction for compliance and analysis/evaluation of ongoing initiatives, Return on Investment (ROI), and annual measurable metrics
- 3.13 Creating and utilizing a Superintendent’s Working Group, including internal and external stakeholders, to advise the Superintendent regarding recommendations and to support any change management processes resulting in a more aligned and effective systems.



Accountability

The pursuit of excellence is a journey and not a destination. Internally, it requires people to be dedicated and committed to the students whom we serve. Externally, it requires our community, as partners, to support our future citizens. Therefore, setting and maintaining standards for excellence for all students and employees is critical to our success. Those standards and levels of accountability begin with me. To ensure transparency, I will provide a report on these obligations and commitments prior to my first scheduled evaluation in November, 2022. The report will reside on the School District of Lee County website for public view, and it will be placed on an agenda and discussed at a School Board Meeting. We are all linked by common dreams and expectations for our children. Regardless of our role, what we do, as a community, matters for our children. Again, I say thank you: thank you for the opportunity to serve, thank you for your commitment to children; and thank you for entrusting me with our community’s most precious resource.