

Better Transparency and Accountability

*A person who never made a mistake
- never tried anything new.*
Albert Einstein

Throughout this book I have outlined many ideas that can take our school district to new levels of greatness. Yes, greatness! I believe it is possible. We cannot spend our way to a better school system. Any significant change will come from a paradigm shift in our culture and system of operation. Positive change starts with a deliberate pursuit of excellence. As Superintendent, I will address the major areas listed below. I have touched on many of them earlier, but I feel it is important to create a list of goals to which I can be held accountable. Here are my commitments to the students of our school district:

1. Evidence-based Leadership

Leadership begins with the Superintendent. An objective accountability system will be created with behaviors aligned to goals and values.

- 2. Leadership Development**
Leadership training will be provided and required for all current and aspiring school leaders. Leaders who make a positive difference in their schools will be sought out, nurtured and recognized.

- 3. Standardization of Employee Behaviors**
To achieve lasting results throughout the system, all employees must be made aware of and expected to follow consistent professional behaviors.

- 4. Individual Accountability**
To require accountability demands that responsibility and control be given to decision makers as close as possible to the level of implementation. When we take ownership of our areas of responsibilities, *we shift from an owner versus a renter mentality.*

5. Recognition of Those Who Make a Difference

In addition to school leaders, other employees who make a positive difference in their areas will be sought out and recognized.

6. Stakeholder Satisfaction

Starting at the top and working down to the school level, evaluations will include the input of students, parents, teachers, educational support personnel, school administrators and district staff.

7. Continuous Improvement

We will create and nurture a process for continuous improvement which focuses on quality and results.

8. Service Recovery

When things go wrong, we will create a process to follow and establish clear lines of communication between the public and the school district.

9. Public Recognition of Excellence

We will communicate what is right with public education in Escambia County through various media.

10. Quarterly Scorecard

Improvement must be measureable. The public will have access to a scorecard that shows the progress that is being made toward the goals.

To accomplish these goals, we will have to make changes at many levels. First, we must **reorganize the budget** and make it functionally efficient. Today's economy has made everyone, individually and collectively, face a budget crunch. This crunch requires us to make changes in order to survive.

Because budget cuts have been made in many different areas in the past few years, we have a **piecemeal model** with no clear direction or focus. This model makes it difficult to function and must be changed.

We must align the budget with our vision. We cannot cut the budget randomly, and we must spend our revenues in the most cost-effective manner possible. The budget reorganization must include the following actions:

1. Eliminate unnecessary duplication in programs and services.
2. Spend less on non-instructional programs and services.
3. Streamline bureaucracy.
4. Maximize flexibility (decentralize budget decisions).
5. Insist on scientific proof that programs are working.
6. Capitalize on economies of scale.
7. Shop competitively and wisely.
8. Examine big-ticket items for return on investment.
9. Conduct compliance, performance, energy and utilization audits.
10. Maximize technology.

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structure that will lead to efficient and effective spending. Nothing will be sacred when it comes to reviewing our budgets and expenses. We need to put our money on the front line, giving teachers the tools and equipment to teach children in the best way possible.

Incentives to save and come in under budget will help eliminate the “spend it all” mentality that currently exists within our budgeting process. Under the new budget system, principals and department heads will have more responsibility for their budgets.

Our new system will provide real time data to monitor spending more wisely throughout the year and help save money. We will harvest money-saving ideas from stakeholders and develop incentives to reward those who can create cost-saving strategies.

Schools will benefit with extra revenues that can be spent to enhance the educational experience. When a school saves money, it will not be punished the next year by getting less (as is done in our current system). Instead, schools will be awarded the savings to be used the next year, thus promoting long term planning.

When this practice is implemented, everyone who has a stake in the school has incentives to save in all areas and put money to better use.

Are you beginning to see the vision? Are you ready for our district to move to a higher level? Can you see the possibilities that are going to be created for our students?

All these ideas, and many more we have not begun to imagine, will become realities when we change our culture to a transparent, accountable program we can all support.

Funding will be one of the greatest challenges facing every school district in Florida over the next few years, but together we will meet this challenge. Transparency and accountability to Escambia County residents are necessary to insure that taxpayer monies are being used as cost-effectively as possible in meeting the needs of our students. Accountability will begin with the Superintendent. I will walk the talk.