

I have had an amazing 33-year career in public education. I have always thought of my job as a gift. I thought who else gets to work with people all with the same agenda; to assist children with education, character, and in finding their unique gifts and talents. I have had the privilege to teach students math, coach young athletes, and mentor educators for over 3 decades. The vast majority of educators are dedicated, caring, and loving individuals who will do anything for children.

I am saddened that staff and children have been directly affected by politicians that have used k-12 education to further their political agendas. Educational decisions should be made by a non-partisan board that has the best interest of children as their foundation for decision making. Parents should be involved in their child's education. A good way to get started back on the right path is for schools, parents, and community members to model and teach good character, civility, and tolerance. Civics is such an important topic for children to learn. Let's demonstrate proper ways to follow peaceful and respectful avenues at our disposal to change regulations or laws. We are part of a civilized society that believes in law and order. Law, order, and respect apply to all people.

Public education is the great equalizer. This is especially true for economically disadvantaged students. It is troubling to me that some individuals have decided that we can only teach students one perspective. History has so much to teach our young people and information is readily available through so many domains. This is why public education is more important than ever before. We want to ensure all students can read, write, research, and analyze information. Once students have learned these skills, they have access to unlimited opportunities. They can make educated informed decisions for themselves utilizing all available information including their own family values. My wife and I have instilled our family's beliefs and values into our two children's education. I am very proud of both of them because they have grown to develop their own beliefs and values through their own experiences and education. I cannot wait until the day that they will pass these on to their children. A free public education for all with diversity of thought and ideas is the strength of this country.

Even though we are working through some troubling times, I am very optimistic for our future. The reason for my optimism is that I have had the opportunity to observe our students in Isle of Wight County in classrooms, interacting in the hallways and cafeterias, and on the athletic fields. What I observe is young people who accept all their classmates without the stereotypes and biases that some utilize to divide us. Our students realize many of these individuals are retreating to the past. Our young people understand that we all have more in common than what separate us. They know education, love, and understanding will always beat hatred. We are living in a turbulent time but our children will be the ones to turn this period in history into an even stronger society that will come together united.

I am going to retire on June 30, 2022 and will pass the baton to a new generation to lead education. Isle of Wight has been a special place. We have accomplished so much together over the past 7 years. Thank you for allowing me to be part of a team that has transformed our

facilities throughout the division, reinvigorated a CTE program, and brought deeper learning, problem solving and creativity back to the forefront of the educational program.

I want to thank my wife, Mary; my son, Sean; and my daughter, Kelsey; who have always supported me in my educational journey. Being the superintendent's wife and superintendent's children is not always easy. I love you all so much.

Public education is what has always separated America from all other nations and made America the strongest nation in the world. I say thank you to everyone I have worked with over the 33 years in public education. You are the true heroes and champions.