

Anthony D. Pack, Ed. S.

Candidate for Executive Leadership Position

Focused on Students

Focused on School and District Effectiveness

Focused on Leadership Development

Focused on Student and Staff Safety

Fiscally Conservative-

115 Tom Chapman Blvd, Apt. 2003

Warner Robins, GA 31088

Cell Phone: 478-538-4883

Email: adpack67@gmail.com

February 2, 2020

Stephen T. Furnari, Chairperson EPAC

& Council Members

1769 East Moody Blvd. Bldg #2

Bunnell, FL 32110

Phone (386) 437-7526

Dear Mr. Furnari and EPAC Members:

Exceptional Student Education is Not a Place to Go but Supports for Learning

Introduction

In response to your request regarding students served by Flagler County Schools through Exceptional Student Education services, let me begin with the report completed by AdvancED in April of 2018. There were 11 Emerging ratings out of 31. Essentially, one-third of the ratings were at the emerging level. More importantly, 10 of the 11 emerging ratings were in the Learning Capacity Domain, “The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the system’s impact on teaching and learning.” I would classify this as making sure the system is ensuring there is limited variability of instruction for all boys and girls at all levels. There needs to be a deep dive into the Learning Capacity Domain.

What happened in January of 2002? Then President George Bush signed “No Child Left Behind” into law, I was relatively young in my career as an educator and even more so as an educational leader. I must admit I did not understand all of the ramifications of the law at first. Once I studied NCLB further, I realized it was an extension of ESSA signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, the rules and regulations began to make sense. As the updates have continued over the years, it is my belief we have made great strides to improve educational opportunities and post-secondary options available to all subgroups and even more so for our exceptional student population. In many states, systems, and schools, this population was marginalized and earned a “Certificate of Attendance” which was not a high school diploma.

1.

Not only are learning outcomes better, we are seeing more students being successful as a result of a concerted effort to make sure ALL subgroups are being taught to the same level and intensity as their peers regardless of their exceptionality. Educators continue to struggle to understand the use of different strategies to bring the learning targets to the students who have various exceptionalities from their peers. We have seen a myriad of possible solutions to support ESE and other subgroup. We have implemented inclusion models, co-teach models, Response to Intervention, and Multi-tiered Systems of Support. Each intervention has the potential to be successful when teachers are trained to implement and administrators conduct fidelity checks. The school system also needs to make sure the chosen method is implemented across all schools with consistency. Again, TRAINING is key.

Anthony D. Pack, Ed. S.

Candidate for Executive Leadership Position

Focused on Students

Focused on School and District Effectiveness

Focused on Leadership Development

Focused on Student and Staff Safety

Fiscally Conservative-

115 Tom Chapman Blvd, Apt. 2003

Warner Robins, GA 31088

Cell Phone: 478-538-4883

Email: adpack67@gmail.com

Once training has been provided to the staff and ongoing fidelity checks take place, I look for those classrooms in each building where implementation has occurred with fidelity to be model-classrooms for their colleagues to observe. In my opinion some variation of a co-teach is best for all boys and girls in the classroom. Both teachers should be pedagogically sound while one may be stronger in academic content. Thinking about just the co-teach model, the success lies with the pairing of the teacher and co-teacher. This coupling must be thought through methodically in an effort to build a long-term team. Just as we say about teachers should build relationships with their students, the relationship between co-teachers is extremely important. Too often I have seen co-teaching teams making great strides to close achievement gaps for ESE students only to be separated the next year. Once a strong team is put together, they need to remain teammates for as long as the partnership works and is best for students..

My stance on the ESE inclusion model has to address a foundational question for me as an educational leader. What is in the best interest of all students? Furthermore, when I make a particular decision would I make it for the next student and/or parent who comes to me with the same or similar concerns. I have two sons, Taylor (27) currently serving in Baghdad as an Airborne Combat Medic and Drew (22) in school at Valdosta State University in working on an Art Education degree. Why are my two young men important? Taylor was served with a 504 Plan for hearing issues. Drew was served with an IEP for speech and hearing problems - he was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. They did not need to be in a resource classroom, they needed to be in their classes where Tier I instruction was occurring. If needed, Tier II or III instructional strategies were brought to them. There is a misconception in education that a student needing Tier II or II instruction goes “somewhere” for the support. The minute a student leaves his or her peers to go to a resource class, the student is missing the Tier I instruction their peers are receiving.

I believe through my own personal experience I have an understanding of what ESE Parents go through. This makes me both empathetic and sympathetic. Drew, my youngest who was served through supports written in his IEP, was not “whole” when he was born. He was however perfect in our eyes and hearts. Since birth he has had more than 23 surgeries or procedures. We were fortunate in that he was able to go through the process of corrective surgeries and IEP supports to achieve at both the secondary level and in post-secondary option. All parents desire is for their child to be healthy upon birth. If something happens and their child is born with a medical or academic concern, their hope is that someone can make their child whole. As educators, we must understand where they are coming from before we can make judgements on how to best meet the needs of the student.

As Superintendent of Flagler County Schools, I would want to do a program evaluation of all of the schools to determine what is being done in each building to support ESE students. I would want to know if there is consistency of practice which decreases the issue mentioned earlier, variability of instruction. You could take this concept a step further by calling it variability of learning opportunities. Working in school improvement now for five years, I lead teams of educational leaders through what we call a GSAPS Review, Georgia School Assessment on Performance Standards. It is much like an AdvancED review but can be done in one day using internal and external stakeholders as well as classroom observations. Commendations, Recommendations, and Targeted Actions are discussed with the school administrators and instructional staff. This process helps uncover where the issues are in the school and gives a laser-like focus on how to best make course-corrections.

Anthony D. Pack, Ed. S.

Candidate for Executive Leadership Position

Focused on Students

Focused on School and District Effectiveness

Focused on Leadership Development

Focused on Student and Staff Safety

Fiscally Conservative-

115 Tom Chapman Blvd, Apt. 2003

Warner Robins, GA 31088

Cell Phone: 478-538-4883

Email: adpack67@gmail.com

The second part of managing inclusion would be to understand what training has been implemented by the system and to what degree it is observable in classrooms. Once I have more background information, I would want to put together a 30, 60, and 90 plan. Close to the end of the first 90 days, I would want to map out the remainder of the first year and second year. The ultimate issues are making sure we have the right pairing of adults to assist the students during inclusion and ongoing fidelity checks of the support model.

2.

As superintendent of Monroe County Schools, I had a Superintendent's Advisory Council made up of a montage of the community supporting the education system. Additionally my Director of Exceptional Students and I met with the Board to secure funding for a Parent mentor. The parent mentor acted as the liaison between the school/school system to advocate for the needs of exceptional students. The Superintendent's Advisory Council met with stakeholder groups specific to students with disabilities. Out of those conversations, we implemented support groups and transition fairs. We met quarterly to discuss any issues related to schools and the system. We even talked about future plans to ensure my team and I were moving in the right direction for the boys, girls, and community.. There were numerous times in which community input was essential to the recommendations I would make and present to the Board for approval. In each situation, we held open forums for community input. Examples included but are not limited to:

- Consolidation of the Middle Schools;
- Redrawing Elementary School Zones;
- Passing the fourth Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST)
- Implementing a 4th and 5th grade band program; and
- Building a 1200 seat Fine Arts facility at a cost of \$8,100,000.

In each case, hearing from the community helped my team and I to modify plans to make what we considered to be good plans even better. Being open to ideas and even constructive criticism is essential to making the right decisions that are needed for students regardless of the wants of adults. Let me reiterate, I believe it is essential to remember we should make decisions based on student needs not adult, internal or external stakeholders, wants.

In both Kent County Schools and Monroe County Schools where I have served as Superintendent, I have had an open door policy. Listening and understanding the wishes of parents and other stakeholders is essential to leading a district. An open door policy means everyone goes through the chain of command (work with the teacher, then the school administration, next the central office administrator over the concern, and finally with superintendent). Should a reasonable response not be given to an individual, they can make a request to see the superintendent regarding the matter. There will be times when a parent will bring an issue to our attention that was not thought about and likewise there will be certain requests that may not be able to be granted. As a leader, it is my responsibility to make sure I have been open to hearing from the essential parties for which the issue is related. It will be my responsibility to make sure my team and I look into matters on behalf of the ESE population, 16% of the district population, as well as any other group that may be feeling marginalized.

As we work together, it will take all of us working in sync to do what is best for students. There will be several statements I will make often because they are from my core beliefs: "What is best for boys and girls?" and "In Flagler County Schools we...". My preference is to hold Executive Cabinet Meetings (administrators in senior

Anthony D. Pack, Ed. S.

Candidate for Executive Leadership Position

Focused on Students

Focused on School and District Effectiveness

Focused on Leadership Development

Focused on Student and Staff Safety

Fiscally Conservative-

115 Tom Chapman Blvd, Apt. 2003

Warner Robins, GA 31088

Cell Phone: 478-538-4883

Email: adpack67@gmail.com

positions at the central office) and System Leadership Team Meetings (Executive Cabinet Members and Principals) to make sure no decision is made without input from the two groups. Once the System Leadership Team has discussed an item that impacts the classroom teachers and more importantly students, I ask Principals to take the information back to their school leadership team (administrators and teachers) with leadership team members taking back to the rest of the teachers. The ideas and recommendations go down and then come back up through this cycle. I do not like to make top down decisions impacting classroom teachers without input from the instructional staff. If information is needed quickly, I will work with the technology department to develop a survey where we can gather feedback.

3.

There is no place in any work environment for allowing retaliatory behaviors.. An IEP Committee meeting is where everyone's input has to be taken into account. If something is going to be controversial, the district office administrator of ESE will be present and should speak from the districts mission, vision, and guiding principles to ensure appropriate support is provided for the student in question.. To keep it simple, it would be my expectation that the meeting starts with "We are here to do what is best for (student's name). It is essential that we listen to all members of the IEP Committee to make sure we make the best decision for (student's name)." I will make this expectation clear to all administrators.

If I were to be made aware of a situation where retaliation is perceived to have occurred or did occur, I would have a meeting with both parties individually and then together to come to consensus about expected behaviors. If retaliation occurred, I would put in writing to the perpetrator expected behaviors and expectations from this point forward. It will be investigated and it will not be tolerated. This becomes a non-negotiable as an unacceptable behavior in Flagler County Schools. Additionally, it will be my practice to be the primary evaluator of principals as well as senior members of the central office team. I will work with them to determine their individual improvement goal and any system improvement goals they are expected to accomplish. Just as the Board of Education will evaluate me, I will evaluate principals and senior central office administrators.

4.

In both systems where I have served as superintendent, I have worked directly with all administrators to use a "Growth Mindset." There will be a need for multiple layers of building capacity for current and future leaders. I will need to look at the experiences of each administrator at both the Central Office and School levels. Once I have a feel for their strengths and weaknesses, I can work with my team and Regional Service Centers to develop the appropriate programs. In my current capacity, I serve as the Leadership Development Director. We have a Teacher Leader Endorsement, an Aspiring Leaders Cohort, and an Alternative Preparation for Educational Leadership Certification Program. I have been fortunate to be a part of each of these programs.

I believe you have to start building leadership capacity at the teacher level. They then make their way through additional school system initiatives or programs offered by the Regional Service Centers. (I was unable to find much information about the RSC in Florida. I am making an assumption they perform some of the same services as our Regional Educational Services Agencies.)

Anthony D. Pack, Ed. S.

Candidate for Executive Leadership Position

Focused on Students

Focused on School and District Effectiveness

Focused on Leadership Development

Focused on Student and Staff Safety

Fiscally Conservative-

115 Tom Chapman Blvd, Apt. 2003

Warner Robins, GA 31088

Cell Phone: 478-538-4883

Email: adpack67@gmail.com

5.

I feel I have addressed this question to some degree throughout the previous responses but I will try to be explicit. I have hired ESE Directors with teacher and parent input. As a teacher and administrator at the school level, I have attended many IEP meetings. As Executive Director for 6-12 Teaching and Learning/K-12 Assessment Director, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent, I have met with parents who were seeking support for their children. As mentioned earlier, some requests can be granted while others may have to be modified. In the end, I still come back to “What is in the best interest of the student over the long run?”.

Even though Flagler is three times the size of my previous district, my role is to be a leader. I can only be a leader if I have followers. I do not believe that I do the work but that my team and I work together to make the decisions for students, instructional staff, and all other stakeholders.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to provide additional information about my core beliefs. If additional information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony D. Pack

Anthony D. Pack, Ed. S.